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Nation more important than liberty: SC

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South Korea overtakes India as world's 6th largest stock mkt

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SPORTS

Praggs, Gukesh, Divya keep title hopes alive

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DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

ساڈھ روزنامہ بنگلور

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DKS' Karnataka CM dream comes true today

DKS with 14 ministers to be sworn-in; No clarity on DyCM

Ex-CM Siddaramaiah, Lok Sabha LoP Rahul Gandhi, Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge with Chief Minister-designate DK Shivakumar in New Delhi on Tuesday —SALAR

BENGALURU, 2 JUNE

Congress President DK Shivakumar will be sworn in as the State's Chief Minister on Wednesday, fulfilling a long-held political ambition after years of speculation and an extended power tussle within the party.

The 64-year-old Vokkaliga leader, elected Congress Legislature Party leader on May 30, will be administered the oath of office and secrecy by Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot at 4.05 pm at the Glass House in Lok Bhavan. Sources said 12 to 14 ministers are also likely to be sworn in during the first phase, though the final list had not been officially announced.

Among those expected to find a place in the ministry are BK Hariprasad, UT Khader, KJ George, Krishna Byre Gowda, Priyank Kharge, MB Patil, G Parameshwara, Ramalinga Reddy, Satish Jarkiholi and Yathindra Siddaramaiah.

LOCATION: LOK BHAVAN'S GLASS HOUSE | **TIME: 4.05pm**

The swearing-in follows the resignation of Siddaramaiah last week after directions from the Congress high command. Shivakumar, an eight-time MLA widely regarded as the party's key troubleshooter in south India, now assumes Karnataka's top political office.

Ahead of the ceremony, the Congress leadership held meetings in New Delhi with Shivakumar and Siddaramaiah to finalise the composition of the new ministry. Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge, Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi, KC Venugopal and Karnataka in-charge Randeep Singh Surjewala participated in the discussions.

The ministry can have a maximum strength of 34, including the Chief Minister. Intense lobbying by ministerial aspirants has continued in recent days, with speculation that Karnataka may have more than one Deputy Chief Minister and that some ministers from the outgoing cabinet may not be retained.

Speaking ahead of his swearing-in, Shivakumar said the opportunity to become Chief Minister had been "delayed but not denied". Describing his rise as the result of "dedication and hard work", he pledged to govern with sincerity and take all sections of society along. "The world is seeing India through Bengaluru and Karnataka," he said, promising to focus on farmers, women and youth.

He also spoke of ushering in a new "Yuva Yuga" and said he would work with "a lot of dedication" to deliver on public expectations. —*Salar News*

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Iran yet to respond to US peace proposal

DUBAI, 2 JUNE

Iran has not yet responded to a proposed final agreement from the United States aimed at ending the conflict between the two countries, with discussions on the draft continuing in Tehran, according to a source close to the Iranian negotiating team.

The source said Iran was reviewing the proposal cautiously due to a history of US non-compliance and deep-rooted mistrust. "Based on previous experiences, Iran is seeking tangible and real benefits," the source said.

Meanwhile, Iran has suspended communication with mediators after Israel threatened to bomb Beirut as fighting with the Iranian-backed Hezbollah militia in Lebanon intensified. Reports by Iran's semi-official Fars and Tasnim news agencies said Tehran considers Israel's actions in Lebanon a violation of broader US-led ceasefire efforts.

According to reports, Iran's negotiating team is withholding a response to a tougher final framework proposed by US President Donald Trump.

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said Washington had not offered sanctions relief in exchange for the reopening of Hormuz, stressing that any easing of sanctions would be conditional. —*Salar News*

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Former MLC Dayananda Reddy kidnapped for Rs 3 crore ransom, let off later

BENGALURU, 2 JUNE

Former Legislative Council member Dayananda Reddy was kidnapped at gunpoint on Tuesday near Heelalige, under a demand of a Rs 3 crore ransom.

Four assailants reportedly blocked the 63-year-old's car and forced their way in, asking the driver to drive along the route instructed. They claimed they have been given a Rs 10 crore contract to kill Reddy, threatening him in Hindi and English and pinning a gun at his neck. Two others drove up in a red car and forced Reddy's driver into the rear seat, taking control of the vehicle.

They let Reddy off after four hours, only once he agreed to give them Rs 2 crore in the morning. One of the accused identified himself as Praveen and gave Reddy a phone number to contact him once the money had been arranged for.

Reddy said that the registration number of the red car was KL-43-6403.

A FIR was registered by Reddy at Attibele police station. —*Salar News*

Re-evaluation portal faces glitches again; Board alleges cyberattacks

Govt shunts out CBSE heads over OSM row

NEW DELHI, 2 JUNE

The Centre on Tuesday transferred CBSE Chairperson Rahul Singh and Secretary Himanshu Gupta and ordered a probe into the procurement of the board's controversial On-Screen Marking (OSM) system. This was even as students reported fresh technical glitches after the long-delayed re-evaluation and verification portal finally went live.

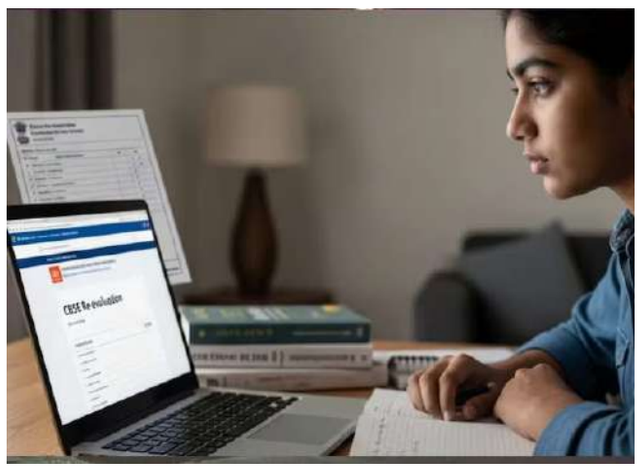
The move comes amid mounting criticism over technical failures, payment issues and delays in the post-result verification process for Class XII students.

The portal, originally scheduled to open on 29 May, was postponed twice before becoming operational on Tuesday. In a notification issued at 4.42am, CBSE said students could begin applying for verification and re-evaluation of scanned answer scripts and released a video tutorial to assist users.

However, several students reported difficulties accessing the portal. Complaints ranged from authentication failures and expired login sessions to repeated unsuccessful login attempts despite entering correct credentials.

The portal was opened after more than 98,000 Class XII students sought scanned copies of over four lakh answer scripts following concerns surrounding the OSM system.

Responding to the complaints, CBSE claimed the platform had come under a series of cyberattacks by "malicious actors". The board said a denial-of-service attack generated 1.5 million hits within two minutes, along with over one lakh attempts at unauthorised file access.



According to CBSE, the portal was supporting more than 8,000 concurrent users and over 16,000 students had successfully submitted applications by 3pm. It added that session time limits had been extended and other improvements introduced based on user feedback.

The facility, available only to students who have obtained scanned copies of their answer books, allows them to report issues such as missing pages, missing supplementary sheets, blurred scans and evaluation against the wrong question paper set. Applications can be submitted online until midnight on 6 June.

Meanwhile, the Education Ministry has brought in technical experts from IIT Madras and IIT Kanpur to help identify glitches in the OSM system and oversee the re-evaluation process.

The inquiry into OSM procurement will be headed by S Radha Chauhan, Chairperson of the Capacity Building Commission, who has been asked to submit a report within a month.

CBSE will now be headed by senior bureaucrats Lokhande Prashant Sitaram and Varun Bhardwaj respectively. —*PTI*

>>>*More on Page 4*

17-YEAR-OLD CBSE WHISTLEBLOWER APPEARS BEFORE PARL PANEL

NEW DELHI, 2 JUNE

CBSE whistleblower Sarthak Sidhant, a 17-year-old Class 12 student from Jharkhand, appeared before a parliamentary panel on Tuesday. He presented evidence alleging irregularities in the board's tendering process for its controversial on-screen marking (OSM) system.

Sidhant spoke before the panel chaired by Congress MP Digvijaya Singh.

Sidhant submitted a seven-page report based on his analysis of tender documents. Earlier, in his blog, 'How CBSE Rewrote Rules to Favour Coempt EduTeck', he alleged that the board systematically altered eligibility and technical requirements across three rounds of tendering to favour Hyderabad-based Coempt EduTeck Pvt Ltd, which ultimately won the contract.

According to Sidhant, CBSE removed clauses relating to poor performance, diluted blacklisting norms by changing the criteria from vendors "blacklisted earlier" to those "currently blacklisted", and relaxed turnover, certification and project eligibility requirements. He argued that the changes disadvantaged larger competitors, including TCS, while enabling Coempt to qualify.

Sidhant also alleged that answer scripts were photographed using mobile phones instead of being scanned with the industrial-grade equipment required under the contract. He cited blurred pages, folds and visible shadows in the copies provided to students. Salar News

COEMPT INVOLVED IN T'GANA ROW

Sidhant also claimed that Hyderabad-based Coempt, which won the CBSE contract for digital scanning and e-evaluation of answer scripts, had previously operated under the name Globarena Technologies. The company was linked to the 2019 Telangana State Board examination controversy, which saw widespread result discrepancies and was later associated with the reported suicides of 23 students.

Also, Coempt secured the CBSE contract after submitting a financial bid 60 per cent lower than that of the IT major TCS. —*Salar News*

Govt to replace WPI with Producer Price Index

NEW DELHI, 2 JUNE

The Centre has announced a phased transition from the Wholesale Price Index (WPI) to the more comprehensive Producer Price Index (PPI), aligning India's inflation measurement framework with global standards. According to the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), both the revised WPI and the new PPI series will be launched on June 15, 2026, and run simultaneously for five years. The WPI will be discontinued at the end of the transition period. The government said the parallel run will allow businesses sufficient time to revise long-term contracts and commercial price escalation clauses that currently rely on WPI-linked data, ensuring a smooth shift to the new system. —*PTI*

>>>MORE ON PAGE 5

Govt revises visa rules for foreigners staying beyond 180 days

NEW DELHI, 2 JUNE

Foreigners coming to India on a visa for 180 days or less will now have to register themselves "any time before the expiry of the said period of 180 days" in case they want to stay beyond the visa period, according to changes in the Immigration and Foreigners Rules, 2025, notified by the Union home ministry.

The new rule will replace the rule that required registration "within 14 days after the expiry of 180 days after arrival in India."

The foreigners on a visa for more than 180 days with a stipulation that "each stay shall not exceed 180 days".

The new rule has now made it clear that such registration will now be granted "only in emergent circumstances."

The new rules also provide slight relief to children born to parents where either or both parents are foreigners.

Previous rules stipulated that upon the birth of the child, parents had to electronically intimate the registration officer within 30 days for availing visa services.

This sub-rule shall not apply in cases where either of the parents is an Indian citizen and that parent wishes to retain Indian citizenship of the child. —*PTI*

No role for 3rd parties in India-Nepal issue: Delhi

NEW DELHI, 2 JUNE

India on Tuesday categorically rejected any role for third parties to resolve its boundary row with Nepal, days after Nepalese Prime Minister Balendra Shah sought the involvement of China and the UK to address the long-standing dispute.

External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said both sides have established mechanisms to deal with all aspects of the border issue and that close to 98 per cent of the India-Nepal boundary has been demarcated.

Shah said in Nepalese Parliament on Sunday that apart from discussions with India on the border dispute, Nepal was in touch with China and Britain as well. "Since this problem dates back to the British period, it is our view that it should be involved," he said.

Nepal and India have had an old boundary dispute over Lipulekh, Limpiyadhura and Kalapani. India has maintained that the territories are part of Uttarakhand. "We have established mechanisms to deal with all aspects of boundary matters. There is no role for any third parties in a matter between India and Nepal," Jaiswal said. —*PTI*

>>*More on Pg 3*

DODA, KISHTWAR HIT

Three cloudbursts trigger flash floods, road blockades in J&K

JAMMU, 2 JUNE

Heavy rainfall triggered three cloudbursts and multiple flash floods in Jammu and Kashmir's Doda, Kishtwar and Poonch districts on Tuesday, blocking roads, inundating residential areas and trapping vehicles under debris. No casualties or major property damage were reported, officials said.

Two cloudbursts struck Kishtwar district — one in the Gahan area of Sarthal and another in Machhipal — while a third hit the Thathri area of Doda district, triggering flash floods.

In Doda, floodwaters entered residential areas and deposited mud and debris on roads, including stretches passing through Thathri market. Several parked vehicles were trapped under debris, while residents of affected houses were shifted to safer locations.

Flash floods also affected the Sabzian-Ghorayank area of Mandi in Poonch district, where debris accumulated near a school building. No loss of life or property was reported.

Union Minister Jitendra Singh said he had spoken to Kishtwar Deputy Commissioner Pankaj Sharma and was informed that there were no casualties. Sharma said flash floods and debris flows affected roads in Sarthal, Gahan, Machhipal and adjoining areas, disrupting connectivity.

Restoration work was launched immediatel. Authorities warned that continued rainfall could trigger further incidents and urged people to stay away from nallahs and other water bodies. —*PTI*

After days of delay, monsoon to land in Kerala on 4 June

NEW DELHI, 2 JUNE

The southwest monsoon is expected to arrive in Kerala around 4 June, the IMD said on Tuesday.

Typically, monsoon arrives in Kerala around 1 June, which marks the beginning of the southwest monsoon season (June-September).

It added that the monsoon will also advance in some more parts of southwest, west central, east central and northeast Bay of Bengal, and the remaining parts of southeast Bay of Bengal around this date.The IMD had earlier said the monsoon onset over Kerala would take place on 26 May. However, it got delayed and the department, on 29 May, stated that the onset could happen in the following week. Last week, the department said the monsoon would be below normal. —*PTI*

Mischievous boy to CM: DKS makes teacher proud

Parvathi, who taught DK Shivakumar from Class 5 to 7, recalls him as mischievous yet a born leader. She said, "He was excellent at sports, very good at extracurricular activities, but mediocre in studies. He was naughty and mischievous." She noted his leadership qualities were evident early on, adding, "Leadership was embedded in his blood. He was always looking at life to become a leader." Shivakumar remained in touch with her, attending her wedding and helping with school permissions. As he prepares to become Chief Minister, she expressed "jubilation." She urged him to focus on educational reforms and screen time rules, reminding everyone that behind the seasoned politician is a mischievous boy with a drive. —PTI

A massive poster of Chief Minister designate DK Shivakumar outside Vidhana Soudha as rows of Congress flags adorn the City, on Tuesday —MOHAMMED ASAD

Security tightened, traffic diverted for swearing-in

Vidhana Soudha to be closed for half day amid mega event in City, as traffic rerouted away from the area

BENGALURU, 2 JUNE

Ahead of Chief Minister-designate DK Shivakumar's swearing-in ceremony at the Lok Bhavan in the City on 3 June, Bengaluru cops have made elaborate security arrangements that include wide traffic curbs.

The stretch from Vidhana Soudha to Lok Bhavan has been lined with Congress flags and banners, while LED screens have been installed at multiple locations to telecast the ceremony. Congress flags and large banners featuring leaders including Sonia Gandhi, Rahul Gandhi, Shivakumar, Randeep Singh Surjewala, and Siddaramaiah have been put up around Vidhana Soudha and the Lok Bhavan area.

A half-day holiday has also been issued for employees working at Vidhana Soudha, Vikasa Soudha and the multi-storeyed government office building.

Tight security arrangements have been made around the venue, with barricades erected on roads leading to Lok Bhavan in anticipation of large gatherings of supporters and party workers.

After meetings with senior officers and protocol authorities about the event, Bengaluru Police Commissioner Seemant Kumar Singh said that "entry will be restricted to invited guests only" and that only authorised vehicle and visitor passes would be permitted.

"At the same time, we anticipate gatherings outside the venue, where LED screens have been installed for people to view the proceedings," he said.

Singh said that traffic curbs is being overseen by the Law and Order Wing, Traffic Wing and VVIP Security Wing, with personnel from across Bengaluru City Police deployed for security duties.

Anticipating heavy congestion in the Central Business District (CBD) area and around Race Course Road, the Bengaluru Traffic Police has announced special traffic arrangements from noon to 8pm that day. Movement of all vehicles, except those officially authorised for the event, will be prohibited on stretches including Cubbon Road, Dr BR Ambedkar Road from KR Circle, Race Course Road, and roads leading to Lok Bhavan from Queens Junction and St Mark's Road.

Motorists have been advised to use alternative routes via Shivajinagar, Cunningham Road and Anil Kumble Junction to avoid delays. Police urged commuters to plan their travel in advance. —PTI

Police during their roll-call at the plot where a Congress office is to be built on Race Course Road, Bengaluru, Tuesday. A ground breaking ceremony will be held there after the swearing-in ceremony —MOHAMMED ASAD

> **It was not a dream. It was a dedication. Dedication with hard work... Though it has been delayed, it was not denied. I feel there's no Shivakumar here. It is a Congress worker, who stood on this democratic set-up with the history of the Congress party... I know roads will not be so easy... (But) I'll do (my job) very sincerely with a lot of dedication. I'll reshape (the State) because the world is seeing India through Bengaluru and Karnataka... I will have to take every section of society together, from the farmers to the women, to the youth and a new 'Yuva Yuga' will start**
>
> -DK Shivakumar, Chief Minister elect

DyCM pick: Supporters take to streets

BENGALURU, 2 JUNE

The lobbying for the Deputy Chief Minister post has intensified on Tuesday with supporters of several legislators taking to the streets.

Demands were raised for Congress leaders KH Muniyappa, G Parameshwara, Shivanand Patil, Priyank Kharge, Eshwar Khandre, HC Mahadevappa, Satish Jarkiholi, MB Patil and Siddaramaiah's son Yathindra to be made as DyCMs. The leaders themselves said that they would abide by the High Command's decision.

Notable protests include in Bengaluru, where Pourakarmikas marched within the Greater Bengaluru Authority Headquarters for Muniyappa and in Belagavi, where Hindu and Muslim supporters of Jarkiholi held special prayers for the AHINDA leader.

Meanwhile, former minister Rani Sathish and former MLC Mohan Kumar Kondajji noted that there was a lack of representation in the Rajya Sabha from the State for the Veerashiva Lingayat community and hoped that the High Command would rectify this.

Four Rajya Sabha seats in Karnataka will be up for grabs on 16 June. —*Agencies*

Speculations abuzz amid UTK's dinner party

Speaker UT Khader is set to host a dinner party for officers and employees of the Karnataka Legislative Assembly Secretariat on Tuesday, triggering speculation that he may be inducted into the new Council of Ministers. Khader downplayed the reports, saying nothing official had been communicated to him.

DKS THANKS GANDHIS FOR SHAPING HIS POLITICAL LIFE

BENGALURU, 2 JUNE

Chief Minister-designate DK Shivakumar on Tuesday expressed gratitude to the Gandhi family for shaping his political journey, vowing to continue to work with sincerity and commitment to build a progressive, inclusive and prosperous Karnataka.

"The Gandhi family has played a defining role in my political journey, not merely through leadership, but through the faith they placed in me at different stages of my life," Shivakumar posted on X.

He thanked Rajiv Gandhi, "who saw potential in a young worker even before I could see it in myself".

"The greatest leaders are those who identify possibilities in others," he added.

He thanked Sonia Gandhi for teaching him important lessons in leadership.

On Rahul Gandhi, Shivakumar said that the Leader of Opposition has "been a strong pillar throughout my public life" and lauded his willingness to listen, while Priyanka Gandhi has always been "approachable, warm and encouraging".

Speaking to press, he added that "Sonia sacrificed; she could have become the Prime Minister. Rahul could have become the Prime Minister. But they did not... So it is my duty to do my job with trust." —PTI

13 held for making illegal firearms in Belagavi

BELAGAVI, 2 JUNE

Thirteen people were arrested after Belagavi police uncovered an illegal firearm manufacturing unit while investigating a murder case. Police traced the country-made pistol used in the murder to Katagali village in Khanapur taluk, where the unit had allegedly been operating since 2024. SP Ramrajan said prime accused Maruti Sutar allegedly manufactured country-made pistols, while Mariyappa Nayak financed the operation and Vishwanath Desai supplied parts. Police seized nine country-made pistols, firearm components, gunpowder, 499 lead pellets, 420 percussion caps and 48 live cartridges. —*SALAR NEWS*

No pregnant wife, man was alone: Cops on video

BENGALURU, 2 JUNE

The City Police on Tuesday urged the public to verify facts before sensationalising issues, after an inquiry confirmed that a man seen in a viral video was travelling alone and his pregnant wife was not stranded in traffic. The incident, which occurred on Sunday, had caused outrage on social media, with claims that traffic on Old Airport Road was halted for VIP movement, specifically for the Governor's convoy.

The video showed a man protesting on the road, alleging his pregnant wife was trapped inside their vehicle due to a traffic halt.

However, the police clarified on X that the inquiry found the individual was travelling alone.

"We want to reiterate that in any situation during road travel, priority is always given to ambulances and medical emergency cases,"," the police stated. —PTI

GBA proposes 1km walk challenge, Oppn asks where?

BENGALURU, 2 JUNE

Leader of Opposition in the Assembly R Ashoka on Tuesday questioned Chief Minister-designate DK Shivakumar's "grand vision" of 'Brand Bengaluru' after the Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA) deleted a post on the "#1KmChallenge".

The GBA deleted its social media post asking citizens to walk for a kilometre to reduce congestion and improve their health, as netizens demanded walkable footpaths.

Ashoka alleged on X that the challenge was "sick, tone-deaf joke" and that Shivakumar displayed "criminal neglect" towards the City's infrastructure as he was the Bengaluru Development Minister.

"A single week of rain, and Bengaluru's roads have completely disintegrated into death traps," Ashoka stated. "From Chickpet, KR Market, and Mamulpet to Horamavu, Outer Ring Road, and Lavelle Road, the entire City has been converted into a dangerous obstacle course. While the Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA) conducts mock parades, the public is risking their lives navigating flooded, crater-ridden stretches full of filthy drain water".

"Under (DKS') watch, civic coordination has completely collapsed. The Bengaluru Water Supply and Sewerage Board (BWSSB) digs up the roads (and) the GBA fails to fix them," Ashoka said, adding that pothole filling shouldn't be a "seasonal scam" and Shivakumar should do the job he "fought to get". —PTI

Belagavi man dies by suicide, names cops

BELAGAVI, 2 JUNE

A man from Belagavi allegedly committed suicide after naming police officials and two private individuals in a note, in Gokak taluk. Ravindra Danavvagol, from Bendigeri village, took his own life on Tuesday. Reports state Ravindra had lent Rs 8 lakh to two men, Laxman Chandargi and Bharamappa Poojari. When he sought repayment, they refused and threatened him. In his suicide note, Ravindra claimed he approached local police for action.

The note stated, "I had approached local police seeking action against the two men. I submitted complaints to PSI Anand and a former DySP, Mulla, but no action was taken." The man also alleged that he was subjected to threats and intimidation, which caused severe mental distress.

Unable to cope, Ravindra ended his life. A case has been registered at Mudalagi Police Station, and investigations are ongoing. Police are yet to comment on the note, the veracity of which will be established.—*Salar News*

Help is available. Please call Tele Manas at 14416, or SAHAI at 080-25497777 for support.

TO REVOLUTIONISE TREATMENT?

Bengaluru start-up uses dogs and AI to detect cancer

With sensors atached to them, specially trained dogs examine breath samples—*ANI*

BENGALURU, 2 JUNE

A Bengaluru-based startup called Dognosis is using trained dogs and AI technology to help detect cancer at an early stage through human breath samples – an innovation that could make cancer screening faster, cheaper and more accessible.

The process begins with collecting breath samples from participants using specially designed face masks that capture volatile organic compounds (VOCs) present in human breath, which can change in the presence of diseases such as cancer.

- Doctors associated with the project say the technology has shown promising results

The samples are then brought to the laboratory, where specially trained dogs examine them inside a controlled testing setup equipped with sensors and monitoring systems. The startup has also brought in international trainers to prepare the dogs used in the detection process.

"This data is then processed through AI systems trained using algorithms to convert what is usually considered subjective behaviour into objective scientific analysis," said Suba, Head of the Research and Development Department at Dognosis.

The company claims that its Phase-2 trials conducted over the past two years on nearly 1,500 participants showed an accuracy rate of around 90 per cent. Doctors associated with the project say the technology has shown promising results in these trials. Experts believe that combining AI with biological detection systems could significantly improve early screening and timely intervention. —*ANI*

— PTI

WB's free bus ride draws 22% more women on Day 1

KOLKATA, 2 JUNE

The first day of West Bengal's free bus travel scheme for women saw a 22 per cent increase in passengers, with figures rising from around two lakh women in Kolkata and four lakh across the state on 25 May to 2,44,121 in Kolkata and nearly 4.88 lakh statewide on 1 June. A senior transport official said, "The response on the very first day has been extremely encouraging. A 22 per cent rise indicates the scheme is addressing a real necessity." The department plans to increase buses on key routes and allocate more seats for women and senior citizens. The scheme, launched on 1 June, is a fulfilment of a key electoral promise, allowing free journeys for women in both short and long-distance travel, said Women and Child Development Minister Agnimitra Paul.—*PTI*

Miscreants mended ways through goli, not boli: Yogi

KUSHINAGAR, 2 JUNE

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath stated his government dealt firmly with miscreants, saying, "Those who did not mend their ways through words were compelled to do so through bullets." Addressing a gathering after inaugurating projects worth over Rs 424 crore, he contrasted UP's past with its present. "The state was known for pistols and bombs, now it manufactures BrahMos missiles," he said. The CM claimed, "We have set these miscreants right. Those who did not listen to words, listened to bullets." He criticised previous governments for allowing criminal activity, referring to the pre-2017 regime as "jungle party," and spoke of UP's transformation under the BJP-led government. He highlighted development milestones in Kushinagar, including a medical college, airport, and university, and praised the Ram temple's construction. —*PTI*

Rajya Sabha election scheduled for 18 June in TN

CHENNAI, 2 JUNE

The Tamil Nadu Rajya Sabha by-election for the lone seat, vacated by AIADMK's C Ve Shanmugam, will be held on 18 June, according to Returning Officer P Thenmozhi. Shanmugam, who resigned from the Rajya Sabha on 7 May after winning the 23 April Assembly election from Mailam, prompted the vacancy. Nomination papers can be submitted from 3 to 8 June, with scrutiny on 9 June. If contested, polling will take place on 18 June between 9am and 4pm at the Secretariat, following withdrawal deadlines by 11 June. The election aims to fill the casual vacancy from Tamil Nadu's Legislative Assembly members.—*PTI*

'Not a monarchy', Bihar CM on Rabri's bungalow row

SHEIKHPURA, 2 JUNE

Bihar Chief Minister Samrat Choudhary subtly criticised opposition over Rabri Devi's bungalow allotment, saying, "It is not a monarchy... The mother wants one house, and the son desires another." Addressing a gathering at Sahyog camp, he referred to Rabri Devi, who refuses to shift from her current residence, and her son Tejashwi Yadav, who occupies another. Choudhary added, "I have never lived in a government bungalow; I live in my private house." He praised Nitish Kumar for vacating his residence quickly and said, "When told to step down, I will leave without hesitation." The CM also highlighted the government's efforts through Sahyog camps to resolve citizens' grievances and pledged strict action against officials neglecting applications. —*PTI*

TMC wants Sobhandeb as LoP, not Didi

Abhishek sends fresh letter to Speaker endorsing Sobhandeb amid fake signature row

KOLKATA, 2 JUNE

TMC national general secretary **Abhishek Banerjee** on Tuesday has written a fresh letter to West Bengal Assembly Speaker Rathindra Bose, reiterating the party's decision to appoint Sobhandeb Chattopadhyay as the Leader of Opposition (LoP).

The communication added a fresh twist to the ongoing alleged signature forgery case and an additional intrigue to speculations on the fallout of the visible cracks in the Trinamool legislative party from where two MLAs -- Ritrabrata Banerjee and Sandipan Saha -- were expelled on Monday.

Two TMC MLAs, Kunal Ghosh and Ashima Patra, attempted to deliver the letter by hand to the Speaker, but alleged that, in the absence of Bose in his office, his office secretary refused to accept it, stating he was under verbal instructions not to receive any letters from the TMC.

"Till yesterday, the Speaker was receiving our letters. For unknown reasons, the office has stopped accepting them from today. How can he not receive an official communication from two elected MLAs? Is this a joke? With this attitude, what kind of custodian of democracy can this Speaker become?" Ghosh said.

A top source in the party later said they had emailed the letter to the Speaker following the failure to hand over a hard copy.

> **There may be a few who succumb to pressure, but there is no fear that a large rebellion will take place. The majority of MLAs will remain with Mamata Banerjee, and the old guard will continue to be firmly in control of the Trinamool Congress. The twin-flower symbol ('jora ghas phool') will remain with Mamata Banerjee."**
>
> -Sobhandeb Chattopadhyay

The letter signed by Banerjee, which also endorsed Ashima Patra and Nayana Bandyopadhyay as deputy LoPs and Firhad Hakim as chief whip, requested the Speaker to recognise the posts "on the basis of the precedent or practice of Legislative Assembly, which is in vogue for decades together".

Abhishek drew from the 2001 precedent of then Speaker Hashim Adul Halim's acceptance of Pankaj Banerjee as LoP following the TMC's recommendation, a practice, he said, that was followed after the 2006, 2011, 2016 and 2021 state elections. "In 2021, the BJP recommended the name of Shri Suvendu Adhikari, as Leader of Opposition, which was accepted by the then Hon'ble Speaker," Banerjee wrote. —*PTI*

BJP WON BY RIGGING COUNTING IN 177 SEATS: MAMATA

KOLKATA, 2 JUNE

Trinamool Congress supremo Mamata Banerjee on Tuesday alleged that the BJP "rigged" counting in 177 of the 294 seats, which went for polls to win the recently concluded West Bengal elections.

Banerjee asserted that she would not abandon TMC workers in "these difficult times", referring to large-scale arrests of leaders on charges of corruption, intimidation and extortion, and the alleged torture of party workers after the TMC's defeat in the recent assembly polls.

Addressing TMC supporters at a day-long dharna in central Kolkata to protest against alleged post-poll attacks on party workers and leaders following the BJP's victory in recent assembly elections, Banerjee said anti-BJP parties would soon formulate a country-wide opposition programme. "Very soon, all anti-BJP parties will meet in Delhi. Wait for a few days and we will soon announce our country-wide course of action," the TMC chief said, referring to the scheduled INDIA bloc meeting next week.

In a post on X, Banerjee called the sit-in protest a programme "against post-poll violence, eviction of hawkers without rehabilitation, irregularities/fraud in the NEET examination, and the vindictive actions of the BJP government".

"We were not permitted to hold our programme at the place we requested. At the alternative site, the police did not allow us to set up a stage or use microphones," Banerjee said, while addressing the crowd using a hand-held megaphone.

The protest was marked by intermittent chaos, with TMC workers shouting slogans amid the former chief minister's speech. —*PTI*

TMC supremo Mamata Banerjee during a sit-in protest against the alleged attacks on party leaders and workers, in Kolkata, West Bengal —*PTI*

TMC councillor arrested for 'extortion'

KOLKATA, 2 JUNE

A TMC councillor of the Kolkata Municipal Corporation (KMC) was arrested here on Tuesday on charges of extortion, cheating, and allegedly collecting kickbacks from beneficiaries of various projects, police said.

Sachin Singh, the councillor of Ward No 36 in the Narkeldanga area of Kolkata, was taken into custody following multiple complaints against him.

On Tuesday morning, a large number of people gathered outside Singh's residence. Some allegedly hurled stones at the house.

Singh had been allegedly extorting money from parking operators and other establishments in the area. He has also been accused of demanding kickbacks in connection with several civic and development projects. Allegations of intimidation and assault have also been levelled against him. Recently another TMC councillor was arrested for graft. —*PTI*

173 MALE NAMES FOUND IN LAKSHMIR BHANDAR SCHEME FOR WOMEN

KRISHNANAGAR, 2 JUNE

The Nadia district administration has launched an investigation after 173 male names were detected in the beneficiary list of the' Lakshmir Bhandar' scheme meant for women in Dhubulia area, an official said on Tuesday.

District Magistrate Srikanth Palli said that the names had already been removed from the list. "At least 173 names of male persons were detected in the Lakshmir Bhandar list in the Dhubulia area of Nadia district; the names have been deleted, and an investigation has been initiated," Palli told reporters.

Preliminary findings suggest that 173 Lakshmir Bhandar accounts were allegedly created and funds withdrawn from them since February this year, an official said. The exact modus operandi and the amount involved are being investigated, he said. —*PTI*

Razed before court hearing: AIMIM on Mumbai's Dargah

MUMBAI, 2 JUNE

Amid heavy police deployment and restricted access, AIMIM leader Waris Pathan was on Tuesday barred from entering the site of a demolished dargah in Goregaon's Aarey colony, triggering sharp protests from the leader over the timing of the administrative action.

Pathan, who was stopped by security forces from entering the site, accused the authorities of misusing power and bypassing judicial procedures while the matter remained sub judice.

Addressing reporters near the demolition site, Waris Pathan said, "They are not allowing me to go inside the dargah premises. They have completely demolished it. An urgent petition was filed yesterday by the trustees of the dargah, and the matter was listed for a hearing at 2pm today at the Dindoshi Court. However, before that could happen, authorities arrived at 9am am and began tearing down the entire structure."

AIMIM leader Waris Pathan —*ANI*

Questioning the urgency of the local administration's action, the AIMIM leader claimed that the law was not allowed to take its due course.

"What is this? At least give us a fair opportunity to approach the judiciary. The matter was filed in court; it was sub judice and pending before the judge," Pathan added.

He further alleged that state machinery was heavily deployed to prevent public or political representatives from accessing the area.

Heavy police deployment remains stationed at the location in Goregaon to maintain law and order, and entry to the immediate vicinity of the demolition site continues to be restricted. —*ANI*

UDF, LDF lock horns in Assembly over Vizhinjam

T'PURAM, 2 JUNE

A sharp exchange broke out in the Kerala Assembly on Tuesday over the Vizhinjam International Seaport after senior CPI(M) leader KN Balagopal accused the Congress-led UDF of opposing the project during protests by local residents.

Participating in the discussion on the Motion of Thanks to the Governor's policy address, Balagopal alleged that the Opposition had sought to halt the construction of the multi-crore port citing the protests.

He specifically referred to Kovalam MLA M Vincent and said those who are now speaking in favour of the project had earlier demanded that it be stopped.

He said the UDF had adopted an obstructionist approach not only towards the Vizhinjam project but also towards infrastructure projects like the Wayanad tunnel road, K-Rail, and four-lane and six-lane road widening projects.

Balagopal's remarks triggered a sharp response from Vincent, who categorically denied ever demanding that the Vizhinjam project be stopped. "If it is proved that I made such a statement, I am ready to quit politics. If not, is Balagopal prepared to do the same?" he asked.

Chief Minister VD Satheesan said on Tuesday that the government would take a decision on relief measures to ease the burden of rising fuel and LPG prices after assessing their impact. — *PTI*

Annamalai signals exit plans to BJP high command

NEW DELHI, 2 JUNE

Former Tamil Nadu BJP president K Annamalai has conveyed his message to the Bhartiya Janata Party high command regarding his resignation and why he plans to step out of the party during a meeting with BJP National President Nitin Nabin, Union Home Minister Amit Shah, and BJP national general secretary (organisation) BL Santosh in Delhi on Tuesday, sources said.

Earlier, Annamalai had detailed discussions regarding the current political scenario in Tamil Nadu with the three leaders and conveyed the reasons why the party did not win there and what is required to strengthen the party in the state. Sources added Annamalai is clear about his thoughts, and the party has assured him it will revert soon after discussing the issue.

After that, Annamalai may brief the media on his next step, whether he will form a new party or stay with the BJP, sources told ANI.

Posters featuring slogans like "Our Leader, Come and Lead Us" have been put up along key roads and streets in Coimbatore ahead of Annamalai's birthday on 4 June. —*ANI*

Nepal's ruling RSP chief meets BJP President Nabin

NEW DELHI, 2 JUNE

Nepal's Rashtriya Swatantra Party (RSP) chairman Rabi Lamichhane met BJP president Nitin Nabin here on Tuesday.

The delegation of Nepal's ruling party comprising senior leaders was accorded a grand welcome at the BJP headquarters.

"Welcoming the delegation, Nabin highlighted the close ties between India and Nepal rooted in shared civilisational heritage," BJP foreign affairs department in-charge Vijay Chauthaiwale said in a statement. The RSP delegation, led by Lamichhane, is on a visit to India as per an invitation by BJP chief Nabin. It arrived in New Delhi on Monday.

Nabin underlined that such interactions help strengthen "democratic dialogue and deepen party-to-party engagement" between the BJP and the RSP.

Chauthaiwale said that Nabin shared insights into the BJP's journey, ideology, organisational structure and its people-centric approach to political engagement.

Meanwhile, both Houses of Nepal's Parliament were adjourned on Tuesday after lawmakers continued to obstruct proceedings over Prime Minister Balendra Shah's remarks about his country's border issues with India. Shah had said that both India and Nepal had encroached on each other's land. This comes after Union Home Minister Amit Shah said that all land within 15 kms of India's borders will be cleared.

While the Lower House, House of Representatives, was adjourned until 8 June, the National Assembly was adjourned until Wednesday. Earlier, the Parliament sessions were adjourned on Monday too. — *PTI*

BJP National President Nitin Nabin with Nepal's Rastriya Swatantra Party RSP President Rabi Lamichhane in New Delhi —*PTI*

INCENTIVE FOR TIMELY REPAYMENT

M'rashtra approves farm loan waiver of up to Rs 2 lakh

MUMBAI, 2 JUNE

The Maharashtra cabinet on Tuesday approved the 'Punyashlok Ahilyadevi Holkar Shetkari Karja-mukti Yojana' to provide farm loan waiver of up to Rs 2 lakh, and also introduced incentive benefits for those farmers who have repaid their loans on time.

The decision was taken at a cabinet meeting chaired by Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis, an official statement said.

The scheme has three components - loan waiver, one-time settlement (OTS) and incentive benefits - and there will be no landholding criterion for eligibility, it said.

Under the waiver component, farmers whose total outstanding short-term crop loans, including principal and interest, are up to Rs 2 lakh will be eligible for a complete debt relief. The loans must have been disbursed between April 1, 2019, and March 31, 2025, remained overdue as of September 30, 2025, and unpaid till March 31, 2026.

The farmers whose dues exceed Rs 2 lakh will be covered under the OTS component. Such borrowers will have to clear the amount above Rs 2 lakh, after which they will become eligible for a waiver of Rs 2 lakh.

They have been given time until 31 March, 2027, to deposit their share of the outstanding amount. Office-bearers of political parties, government employees, income-tax payers and officers and employees of cooperative institutions drawing salaries exceeding Rs 25,000 per month have been excluded from the scheme.

Farmers who have repaid crop loans within the prescribed period in at least two of the three financial years from 2022-23 to 2024-25 will receive an incentive grant of up to Rs 50,000.

Farmers with overdue amounts exceeding Rs 50,000 can avail of a grant of Rs 50,000 after paying the balance amount above that threshold, enabling them to become debt-free.

The Opposition Congress said the loan waiver should not remain merely an announcement. Around 80 lakh women were found ineligible months after the roll-out of the Mukhyamantri Majhi Ladki Bahin Yojana. —*ANI*

Nation more important than liberty: SC

SC quashes drug network chief's bail

NEW DELHI, 2 JUNE

The Supreme Court said on Tuesday that if there is a conflict between the country's sovereignty and personal liberty, the former will get priority, especially in cases involving narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances.

The court made the remarks while setting aside a Punjab and Haryana HC order that had granted bail to a man accused of operating a drug-trafficking network from inside a jail.

"If there is any conflict between the sovereignty of the country and personal liberty, undoubtedly, the former shall prevail, particularly, when a war is being waged against the nation in the form of drugs," Justices Sanjay Karol and N Kotiswar Singh said.

The SC said in this case, there are antecedents involving commission of offences of the same nature under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act and therefore, it cannot be said that the accused is not likely to commit such an offence while on bail.

Noting that the accused has only undergone a year and seven months in jail, the bench said if found guilty, a maximum sentence of 20 years can be imposed upon him.

People dealing with drugs will have to be dealt with a very firm hand as they are destroying the lives of youths, the Supreme Court said on Tuesday in another drug case.

Justices Vikram Nath, Sheel Nagu and V Mohana dismissed the bail plea of an accused who was arrested in June 2022 in a case registered under the NDPS Act, 1985.

The accused had moved the Supreme Court challenging a February order of the Madras High Court refusing his bail application.

The prosecution said that on 11 June 2022 the petitioner and two others were standing with a bag and on seeing the police, they tried to escape.

21 MDMA-ecstasy tablets weighing around 10.15 grams were found in the bag. — *PTI*

CJI ADMINISTERS OATH TO FIVE NEW SC JUDGES

NEW DELHI, 2 JUNE

CJI Surya Kant administered the oath of office on Tuesday to five new SC judges, taking the strength of SC judges to 37, the highest ever. The CJI administered the oath of office to justices Sheel Nagu, Shree Chandrashekhar, Sanjeev Sachdeva, Arun Palli, and V Mohana. The swearing-in ceremony was held on SC premises. The strength of judges in thr SC will now be 37, one short of the sanctioned strength of 38.

The Centre on Monday cleared the appointment of Justice Nagu, the chief justice of the Punjab and Haryana High Court, Justice Chandrashekhar, the chief justice of the Bombay High Court, Justice Sachdeva, the chief justice of the Madhya Pradesh High Court, Justice Palli, the chief justice of the J&K and Ladakh High Court, and senior advocate Mohana as SC judges.

The five names were recommended by the SC Collegium on 27 May. — *PTI*

Justices Sheel Nagu, Chandrashekhar, Sanjeev Sachdeva, Arunpalli and V Mohana —*PTI*

REMOVE ALL ENCROACHERS FROM AGASTHYAMALAI ECO RESERVE: SC

NEW DELHI, 2 JUNE

Taking serious note of the encroachments in the protected areas of the Agasthyamalai ecological landscape in Tamil Nadu and Kerala, the Supreme Court said that a time-bound eviction plan must be implemented.

The SC also directed that disciplinary and legal action must be initiated against all the identified 118 serving and retired government servants who are encroachers there.

Justices Vikram Nath and Sandeep Mehta said encroachments in the protected areas of Agasthyamalai landscape, including the Kalakad Mundanthurai Tiger Reserve, Srivilliputhur-Megamalai Tiger Reserve and the Kanyakumari Wildlife Sanctuary, have proliferated despite directions by the Madras HC and SC.

The SC delivered its verdict on 29 May on a plea raising issues, including those concerning preservation of reserve forests, wildlife sanctuaries and tiger reserves in Tamil Nadu. The Agasthyamalai reserve covers 3,500.36 square km. It noted that as per report a submitted by the district magistrate of Theni district, 4,601 encroachers have occupied 5,072.653 hectares in forests across the district and so far, only 1.8 per cent has been reclaimed. It asked the Central Empowered Committee (CEC) to submit its report by 28 August and posted the matter for hearing on 1 September. — *PTI*

Aussie teacher missing, daughter appeals for help

CHANDIGARH, 2 JUNE

Sunil Sharma, a 66-year-old Australian citizen and high school teacher, went missing in Amritsar on 22 May during a property sale visit. His daughter, Surbhi Sharma, has urged Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann for assistance, saying her father's phone has been off since his disappearance. Sharma, a maths teacher in Melbourne, loved Punjab and invested in property there. His brother Sunny Sharma, also missing, is the prime suspect. Amritsar police have registered a kidnapping FIR, and authorities say Sunny is on the run but will soon be caught. The investigation is progressing, and Sunny faces charges under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act in Himachal Pradesh.—*PTI*

— ANI

Institute develops 'AI Yoga Coach' for practitioners

INDORE, 2 JUNE

Researchers at Shri GS Institute of Technology and Science (SGSITS) have developed an 'AI Yoga Coach' capable of distinguishing correct from incorrect yoga postures and providing real-time guidance. Trained with 2.80 lakh photos, the AI can analyse 104 postures, including Surya Namaskar, and will be tested on International Yoga Day, 21 June . The project received Rs 7.10 lakh from Madhya Pradesh Council for Science and Technology. Principal investigator Lalit Purohit said, "Our AI detects mistakes during practice and suggests improvements." The model uses deep learning, computer vision, and body angle analysis, with plans to offer free access if hardware costs are covered. —*PTI*

'Voice of Hind Rajab' film to release in India

MUMBAI, 2 JUNE

"The Voice of Hind Rajab", the Oscar-nominated true-story about the killing of a five-year-old Palestinian girl by Israeli forces in Gaza, has finally received a censor certificate, paving the way for its theatrical release on 19 June. The film, directed by Tunisian filmmaker Kaouther Ben Hania, sheds light on the tragic story of Hind Rajab, whose killing during the Israel-Gaza war sparked international outrage. It was initially set to release in India in March but was stuck with the CBFC.

"We appreciate the thoughtful consideration extended by the CBFC in evaluating the film and facilitating its release in India," said distributor Manoj Nandwana. —*PTI*

— ANI

Boy crushed under pitch roller at cricket camp

MUMBAI, 2 JUNE

A 15-year-old boy, Aarav (Viren Chaudhary), died after being trapped under a pitch roller during a cricket summer camp in Solapur. The incident occurred on 30 May while children were preparing the pitch under instructions from coaches, with no supervisor present. Police registered a culpable homicide case against two coaches and cricket associations under section 105 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita. The child sustained fatal injuries and was pulling equipment with other children. The investigation aims to establish safety lapses, as preliminary inquiries reveal no adult supervision or safety measures at the scene, police said.—*PTI*

Probe CBSE's OSM system, NSUI tells HC

NEW DELHI, 2 JUNE

The Congress's student wing moved the Delhi High Court on Tuesday seeking an independent enquiry into the alleged irregularities in the CBSE's on-screen marking (OSM) system for the Class 12 exam. The PIL filed by the National Students' Union of India (NSUI) also seeks manual rechecking and physical verification of answer sheets of all aggrieved students. It is likely to be heard by an HC vacation bench on 8 June.

The PIL seeks a direction to the authorities to keep its portal open for a month for verification and revaluation of answer sheets of affected students. The NSUI said the sharp decline in overall performance in this year's Class 12 results has led to widespread concern among students and parents regarding the reliability of the OSM system. The plea asserted that concerns around OSM were not confined to a "small set of students" and those whose answer sheets were affected by scanning defects, mismatch errors or other technical failures cannot be made to suffer because of deficiencies in the system. The plea said that the existing grievance mechanism is inadequate as it left students with "limited digital remedies" and "no meaningful process for manual verification or independent rechecking of disputed answer books." — *PTI*

The NSUI said the sharp decline in student performance in this year's Class 12 exam has sparked concern about the OSM system's reliability—*PTI*

Part of NEET leak suspect's building razed in Maharashtra

BEED, 2 JUNE

Civic authorities in Maharashtra's Beed ordered the demolition of an under-construction building allegedly linked to retired professor PV Kulkarni, the kingpin of the NEET paper leak case, officials said on Tuesday.

The Beed Municipal Council ordered the removal of parts of the four-storey structure in the Shahunagar area citing violations of construction regulations.

Kulkarni, an expert in Chemistry, was part of the panel that set the NEET question paper for years. He was arrested from Pune in connection with the NEET-UG paper leak last month. — *PTI*

ED nabs 4 for duping 19K home buyers of Rs 2K cr

NEW DELHI, 2 JUNE

The ED has arrested four promoters of a real estate group in connection with a money laundering probe into an alleged Rs 2,004-crore homebuyer fraud that affected more than 19,000 buyers and investors.

The accused, Avdhesh Kumar Goel, Rajnish Mittal, Atul Gupta and Vikas Gupta, are promoters/directors of Earth Infrastructures Ltd. They were arrested on 1 June under the PMLA, an official statement said on Tuesday.

The accused were produced before a PMLA court in Delhi, which granted the agency five days' custody for interrogation, it said.The ED said the group collected around Rs 2,004 crore from 19,425 homebuyers and investors by promising timely delivery of residential and commercial units and assured returns.

The agency alleged that its probe found approximately Rs 467 crore had been diverted through various entities.

Meanwhile, the ED on Tuesday raided locations in Maharashtra and Gujarat in connection with a money laundering probe against Mohammad Salim Dola, an alleged Dawood gang drug trafficker who was recently extradited to India from Turkiye, officials said.

They said about 20 locations in Mumbai and in Surat, Rajkot and Ankleshwar were raided after a case was registered by the ED. — *PTI*

Fadnavis rules out scrapping Ladki Bahin

MUMBAI, 2 JUNE

Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis on Tuesday assured that the government will not discontinue its flagship 'Mukhyamantri Majhi Ladki Bahin' welfare scheme, clarifying that 1.70 crore eligible women will keep receiving benefits despite the recent removal of lakhs of beneficiaries. The chief minister's remarks have come after the 30 April deadline for e-KYC (Know Your Customer) verification, and e-verification saw nearly 80 lakh beneficiaries being weeded out of the scheme, drawing sharp criticism from the Opposition parties.

Speaking to reporters ahead of the weekly cabinet meeting, Fadnavis said the state government had undertaken a verification exercise of beneficiaries after the scheme was launched and several irregularities came to light.

"When the scheme was introduced, women were allowed to self-certify their eligibility, as many did not have time to submit documents. Subsequently, verification was carried out as the government expenditure is subject to audit," he explained. He noted that the scrutiny revealed anomalies, such as women from families of government employees availing benefits and, in some instances, men filing applications. He said that around 10 lakh beneficiaries were found to have discrepancies, while nearly 14,000 men had applied under the scheme.

The CM said the money already paid would not be recovered from beneficiaries. —*PTI*

Fazil Nagar town to be renamed Pawagarh: Yogi

KUSHINAGAR, 2 JUNE

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Tuesday announced that Fazil Nagar town will be renamed Pawagarh in honour of Jain Tirthankar Lord Mahavir.

He also dedicated 278 development projects worth over Rs 424 crore to the town. Certificates, sanction letters, and cheques were distributed to beneficiaries of various government welfare schemes.

"By connecting with the rich traditions and cultural heritage of Pawagarh, people from across the country and around the world will be drawn to this sacred place in large numbers," said Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath.

The proposed name, Pawagarh, is derived from Pawapuri in Bihar, a revered Jain pilgrimage site closely associated with Lord Mahavir, the founder of the Jainism religion. —*PTI*

2 kids killed, several injured as dust storm hits Barmer

JAIPUR, 2 JUNE

Two children were killed and several others were injured after a strong dust storm accompanied by rain damaged houses and disrupted power supply in Rajasthan's Barmer district, police said on Tuesday.

The incident occurred late Monday night when high-velocity winds and rain lashed rural areas, uprooting trees, electricity poles and tin sheds, officials said.

The storm had a widespread impact in Chohtan, Ramsar, Gadraroad and border villages, where several trees and power poles were uprooted.

KERALA ALERT

The IMD predicted very heavy rainfall in Kerala in coming days, and sounded an orange alert in several districts between 2 and 5 June. It also said the southwest monsoon is likely to arrive in Kerala by 4 June.

The IMD issued an 'orange alert' in the three northern Kerala districts of Malappuram, Kozhikode and Wayanad on Tuesday, and a 'yellow alert' for the remaining 11 districts.

The IMD also issued 'orange alerts' for four districts on Wednesday, eight districts on Thursday and seven districts on Friday, while the remaining districts were placed under 'yellow alert' on those days.

TN WARNING

The IMD on Tuesday issued heavy rainfall warning for 15 districts in the western and southern parts of Tamil Nadu.

The latest bulletin from the Regional Meteorological Centre warned that a combination of high temperature and intense humidity will create heatwave conditions across north Tamil Nadu. Rain is expected in the western and southern districts of the state till 7 June. — *PTI*

MOM, LIVE-IN PARTNER HELD

Cigarette burn marks, 51 injuries seen on Kerala kid

T'PURAM, 2 JUNE

Shocking details have emerged in the death of a one-and-a-half-year-old boy in Kerala, with the autopsy revealing that the toddler had suffered 51 injuries and had endured weeks of brutal physical abuse before he died.

The child, Arshid, died on 29 May. His mother, Akhila, and her live-in partner, Ashkar, have been arrested by Nedumangad Police. The child was from Akhila's first marriage.

Senior police officers said the post-mortem report paints a horrifying picture of torture.

Doctors found around 51 wounds on the child's body, including a fatal head injury, multiple external injuries and severe internal bleeding.

Police said on Tuesday that the combination of the head injury and internal trauma caused the toddler's death.

Investigators said the medical findings indicate that the child was subjected to systematic assaults before his death.

One of the most disturbing findings was that both of the toddler's arms had been fractured.

A few weeks before the child's death, medical treatment had been sought for the injuries, and it was allegedly claimed at the hospital that the fractures were caused by a fall.

Police believe the child became an obstacle to Akhila and Ashkar's life.

Ashkar allegedly assaulted the boy repeatedly while Akhila failed to intervene or alert the authorities.

The case came under scrutiny after the child's grandparents raised suspicions about the injuries on the toddler's body. The maternal grandmother alleged that the boy had no injuries when he was taken away from her home by Akhila. Family members have also alleged that the child had circular burn marks on his body.

Initially, Ashkar told police that the child suddenly started coughing and vomiting after having food on 29 May.

He claimed the toddler later became unconscious and was rushed to hospital by ambulance.

The child was first taken to a nearby hospital and later shifted to SAT Hospital in Thiruvananthapuram, where doctors declared him dead.

However, the post-mortem findings led police to register a murder case and arrest both Ashkar and Akhila.

Ashkar has been charged with murder, while serious charges have also been filed against the child's mother by the police. — *PTI*

Police believe the child became an obstacle to Akhila and Ashkar's life and they decided to eliminate it—*SCREENGRAB*

About 45 pc of Vellore slum children stunted

NEW DELHI, 2 JUNE

A study that evaluated long-term patterns of Body Mass Index (BMI) from birth to age nine in 251 children from urban slums in Tamil Nadu's Vellore has found that 45 per cent of the cohort was stunted at age two.

By age 7, more than 26 per cent of the children were classified 'thin' and 5.2 per cent classified 'overweight/obese', findings published in The Lancet Regional Health Southeast Asia journal show.

Researchers, including those from Hyderabad's TIFR and Christian Medical College in Vellore, also found that by age nine, the prevalence of underweight was 21.6 per cent, while that of overweight-or-obesity increased to 14.6 per cent.

Maternal BMI was a predictor of childhood thinness, particularly at ages five and nine, the team said. — *PTI*

A WALK IN THE RAIN

People cover themselves amid rainfall, in Chikkamagaluru, Karnataka, on Tuesday. India Meteorological Department has forecast heavy rainfall in the Northeastern region, Coastal and South Interior Karnataka — *PTI*

Govt to replace WPI with Producer Price Index

The transition from WPI to PPI aligns with global best practices adopted by advanced economies and the recommendations of the International Monetary Fund — *PTI*

The government will phase out the Wholesale Price Index (WPI) over the next five years while simultaneously introducing a more detailed Producer Price Index (PPI), covering output, input and services prices, in a bid to offer a more realistic assessment of inflationary trends in the economy.

Speaking with reporters, Praveen Mahto, Principal Economic Adviser in the Commerce and Industry Ministry, said that the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) will release the revised series of WPI with new base year 2022-23 on 15 June, which would replace the existing series with base year 2011-12.

The department would release a new series of PPI from 15 June. It will have three indices - Output PPI, Trial Input PPI and Services PPI. Initially, services PPI will have seven services - banking, securities transaction, insurance, management of pension funds, railways, air (passenger), and telecom.

"Considering the wide usage of WPI in price escalation clauses, this index will be released for five years from the date of release of the revised series along with PPI and will be discontinued thereafter," the ministry said in a statement.

Mahto said that after five years, the PPI is expected to replace WPI.

The transition from WPI to PPI aligns with global best practices adopted by advanced economies and the recommendations of the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

The availability of both Output PPI and Input PPI provides a better understanding of the price movements of output items vis-à-vis the input items used in an industry.

It also explains how inflation experienced by producers of input items is passed through to the output they produce.

Mahto said that the Service PPIs for seven services have been compiled in the first phase based on the availability of data from administrative sources/agencies.

More services are planned to be added to the PPI basket of services in subsequent phases, subject to data availability.

The DPIIT informed that WPI and Output PPI are being compiled on monthly basis and will be available for May 2026 (Provisional) alongwith the back series from April 2023 to April 2026 (37 months) on 15 June. The monthly Trial Input PPI (for the manufacturing sector only) will be published on an experimental basis from March 2026 onwards.

"This would enable the department to examine the data quality and also receive feedback from stakeholders and users. Service PPI, compiled on a quarterly basis, will be released for Q4 of 2025-26 (provisional) along with the back series from Q1 of 2023-24 to Q3 of 2025-26," the ministry said.

Speaking about the new series of WPI (2022-23), Dilip Kumar Sinha, Deputy Director General in the Office of the Economic Advisor, said the total number of items has increased from 697 to 957.

He said that new sources of energy, such as solar and wind, have been added under electricity group. In addition, nuclear electricity has been included in the basket.

Similarly, crude petroleum and natural gas have been shifted from the primary articles to the fuel and power.

This reorganisation would lead to better alignment, as this group already houses other major fuels such as coal, electricity, and petroleum products.

WPI, Output PPI, and Service PPI are compiled on the basis of basic price (which excludes net tax and trade and transport margins), whereas Input PPI is compiled using the purchaser's price, since industries purchase inputs from the market. WPI revision is a periodic exercise. Two major indices are used to track price movements -- the Wholesale Price Index (WPI) and the Consumer Price Index (CPI). While the WPI measures price movements in wholesale markets, the CPI tracks inflation at the retail level and includes certain services.

WPI is a key indicator for measuring the average change in the prices of a fixed basket of commodities at the initial stage of a commercial transaction over a given period, with reference to a base year.

Ever since the introduction of the WPI in 1942 with the base year 1939, seven revisions have taken place, introducing new base years - 1952-53, 1961-62, 1970-71, 1981-82, 1993-94, 2004-05 and 2011-12.

The current WPI base year 2011-12 series was launched in May 2017.

Wholesale price inflation shot up to a 42-month high of 8.3 per cent in April, driven by a spike in energy prices following disruptions caused by the West Asia conflict. Most countries in the world release output PPI and services PPI.

When asked whether government contracts that are currently have price-escalation clauses linked to the Wholesale Price Index (WPI) would be shifted to the Producer Price Index (PPI) in the coming years, Mahto said that the department of expenditure will come out with a circular "very soon" to inform all the users that "in a period of five years, we will be transiting from WPI to PPI. So, henceforth in case they want to enter into a long term contract then they should be using PPI rather than WPI".

He also said that the PPI services will be released quarterly. Major economies such as the US, China, Japan, Germany, France and other G-20 countries use PPI to measure the average changes in prices received by domestic producers for their output. —*PTI*

SALAR ساہر

Trump's call to expand Abraham Accords may fail

As negotiations to end the Iran war continued on May 25, Donald Trump made a series of phone calls in which he pressed key leaders from the Middle East to join the Abraham accords.

Announced in 2020, these accords established diplomatic relations between Israel and several Arab states, beginning with the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Bahrain. The US president reiterated his proposal in a social media post later that day: "After all the work done by the United States to try and pull this very complex puzzle together, it should be mandatory that all of these countries, at a minimum, simultaneously, sign the Abraham accords."

Trump's post suggested that Iran could also join the accords. This really would be something, given that one motivation for signing the accords was to push back against Iranian influence in the region. Sadly for Trump, this is wishful thinking at best.

In advocating this approach, Trump misreads the vitriol held by many across the Middle East – and beyond – about Israel's actions in Gaza and Lebanon. The official death toll in Gaza, where Israel has fought a military campaign since 2023, stands at over 70,000 people. A further 170,000 people have been injured amid what many are calling a "genocide".

In southern Lebanon, Israel has used ground troops and a relentless campaign of air attacks since the beginning of the Iran war in what appears to be an attempt to secure a "buffer zone" against attacks from Hezbollah.

More than 3,200 people there have been killed so far, with a further 7,500 injured and millions forced from their homes. This is despite the signing of a ceasefire between Israel and the Lebanese government in April.

OPPOSING TRUMP'S PROPOSAL

The destruction of Gaza angered Bahrain and the UAE, with Manama recalling its ambassador to Israel shortly after the start of the war. But neither country withdrew from the Abraham accords. Instead, trade and security collaboration continued with both taking the stance that working more closely with Israel would be in the best interests of their states.

Yet Bahrain and the UAE are outliers in the Middle East. Other countries are far less willing, or able, to normalise with Israel. When US officials visited Saudi Arabia in 2024, four years after the signing of the accords, Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman is said to have told them he feared being killed if he normalised relations with Israel.

And since the outbreak of the Gaza war, bin Salman and other Saudi officials have repeatedly stressed that normalisation of diplomatic relations with Israel will not happen without irrevocable steps being taken towards Palestinian statehood.

Meanwhile, tensions between Israel and Turkey have been brewing for some time. In February, the former Israeli prime minister, Naftali Bennett, declared that Turkey was "the next Iran". More recently, on May 20, Israel's minister of culture and sports, Miki Zohar, declared that Turkey should be treated as "an enemy state".

And in Qatar, state officials remain furious with Israel for launching strikes on Doha in 2025 in an attempt to kill key Hamas figures who were based there.

The idea of Iran becoming a signatory of the Abraham accords in the immediate aftermath of a devastating war is also fanciful. Tensions between Israel and Iran can be traced back to 1979, when a revolution toppled the Iranian monarchy and led to the establishment of an Islamic republic.

Iran's new leadership immediately provided support to the Palestinian cause and, in later years, to Hezbollah and other militias across the Middle East. In response, Israel has carried out military strikes on targets across Iran, assassinated key nuclear scientists and more. To suggest disregarding almost half a century of history with little to no efforts at reconciliation is farcical.

Why, then, has Trump suggested such a move? Perhaps it speaks to a need to assuage domestic constituencies within the US, or those in Israel, pushing for wider normalisation between Tel Aviv and the Arab and Muslim worlds.

A second reading is that it is an attempt to prevent diplomatic progress on resolving tensions with Iran by putting an insurmountable obstacle in the way in the form of the demand for normalisation with Israel, perhaps reflecting the plurality of positions on the war found in Washington.

A third view is that this is a move aimed at diminishing the scale of destruction and human suffering that has been wrought on Gaza, the West Bank and Lebanon, in the hope that a form of transactional politics – driven by trade and security – will prove sufficient. But, as Trump will find out, this is a longshot.

—*The Conversation*

Trump's post suggested that Iran could also join the accords. This really would be something, given that one motivation for signing the accords was to push back against Iranian influence in the region — *PTI*

LETTERS write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

Killing unabated despite truce, no value for human life: Israeli soldiers

- A soldier describes instructions for troops about anyone crossing the yellow line: "eliminate him no matter what." A soldier who was stationed in Gaza says human lives weren't valued. Another soldier stationed in Gaza for weeks after the ceasefire said, "There was a general feeling that human lives are not valuable."

Mourners take the last look at the body of Jamal Abu Aoun, who was killed in an Israeli airstrike, during his funeral at al-Aqsa Hospital in Deir al-Balah, central Gaza Strip —*ANI*

The Israeli combat soldier saw his teammates yelling in celebration, congratulating one another. They had just struck a vehicle of Palestinians driving near the Israeli-controlled part of the Gaza Strip, killing everyone inside.

The reservist said scenes like this had become common after a fragile ceasefire took effect in October. In the weeks he was stationed in Gaza, he said, he saw soldiers relishing the chance to go after those who crossed — or came close to crossing — the so-called yellow line that divides the strip into Israeli-controlled and Palestinian areas.

"It was a jungle," the soldier, in his 20s, told The Associated Press. "After the ceasefire, the order was: If someone crosses the line, you shoot them."

As diplomatic efforts to strengthen the deal have stalled, three soldiers described a sense of confusion in the embattled territory, with a lack of clarity on rules of engagement around the yellow line. Some commanders paid lip service to the agreement, the soldiers said, while privately voicing desire for the war in Gaza to continue. Sometimes, troops were too far away or acted too quickly to recognize who they were shooting, one soldier said — a concern echoed in comments from a whistleblower group of veterans.

The soldiers' accounts are a rare glimpse into what's happened in the Israeli-controlled part of Gaza since the deal went into effect seven months ago. The soldiers — reservists deployed throughout Gaza between October and January who've since returned — spoke on condition of anonymity because they feared being ostracized over their comments. They said they were speaking out because they were angered and saddened by what they saw.

AP has documented shootings of Palestinian civilians, including children playing, close to the yellow line. And the soldiers said it felt like the killings never stopped amid the tenuous deal. "To call it a ceasefire is a joke," one soldier told AP.

GAZA'S YELLOW LINE HAS BEEN AMBIGUOUS

When the ceasefire went into effect, Israel withdrew troops to a buffer zone demarcated by a yellow line, giving it control of just over half the strip. Under the agreement, Israeli forces are meant to complete a fuller withdrawal, though there's no timeline for that. The US-backed diplomat overseeing the truce says progress is deadlocked over the central sticking point of disarming Hamas, upon which all other issues — including Israeli withdrawals and reconstruction — hinge.

In the meantime, Israel has expanded control over additional territory in Gaza. Both sides have accused the other of violating the ceasefire. The line's exact location has been ambiguous and sometimes invisible. In some places, it's marked with yellow blocks and barrels; in others, it at times hasn't been indicated at all.

The Israeli military invited AP this week to see a section of the yellow line in central Gaza, near the Maghazi refugee camp. The line there was visible, demarcated by a wide dirt path and small yellow markings. To the east was a desolate stretch of open space leading to a heavily fortified Israeli military post about 500 meters away.

Since the ceasefire went into effect, more than 900 people have been killed in Gaza — dozens of those close to or over the yellow line, according to Gaza's Health Ministry. The ministry doesn't say how many are militants, but unarmed men and children have been among the dead.

BREAKING THE SILENCE

Israel's military has said most of the people killed crossing the line posed a threat to troops. But soldiers who spoke to AP and Breaking the Silence — the whistleblower group that has collected troops' testimonies throughout the war — say that at times soldiers were too far away, acting too quickly and under too much pressure to tell.

Breaking the Silence says the general rules of engagement are extremely permissive, especially for those crossing the line, with orders in many areas being "shoot to kill." Executive director Nadav Weiman, a veteran who served in Gaza but not in this war, said distance from the target and some trigger-happy soldiers can be problematic.

He said orders and policies from the military's high commanders "have created a reality where countless civilians have and are being killed for crossing invisible lines."

In one account to Breaking the Silence, in interview notes seen by AP, a soldier describes instructions for troops about anyone crossing the yellow line: "eliminate him no matter what." A soldier who was stationed in Gaza says human lives weren't valued.

Another soldier stationed in Gaza for weeks after the ceasefire said the message from commanders was to hold the line at all costs. "There was a general feeling that human lives are not valuable," he said.

When it came to demarcating the yellow line, the soldier said his superiors told him it was "too much work," not their job and that Palestinians should know where it was. Being in Gaza took an emotional toll, he said.

The soldiers told AP that on the ground, the ceasefire is elusive. "We need to stop using this term," one said of the word, ceasefire. "It's not serving people that want to stop the war." — *PTI*

Israel kills 8 in Lebanon after Don's 'truce'

Talks in US soon; Trump says no Israeli troops in Beirut

JERUSALEM, 2 JUNE

Israeli drone strikes on southern Lebanon on Tuesday killed at least eight people, a day after US President Donald Trump said Israel and Hezbollah agreed to dial back fighting.

Israel threatened on Monday to strike Beirut's southern suburbs, causing panic in the Lebanese capital. Thousands fled to safer areas while Hezbollah fired rockets at northern Israel. Trump then announced after a call with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and communicating with the Lebanese militant group through mediators that "there will be no troops going to Beirut".

Yet, Lebanon's State-run National News Agency reported Tuesday that an Israeli drone strike hit a car on the road linking the southern town of Marjayoun with the city of Nabatiyeh, killing James Karam, a dentist from the nearby Christian town of Qlayaa, along with his daughter and son.

The Lebanese army said two soldiers were lightly wounded when a separate drone targeted them on a road outside the city.

A drone strike on the village of Jibchit killed two Syrians who worked at a plant nursery, the agency reported, while another on the nearby village of Toul killed two people.

A third strike hit a car near the village of Harouf, killing one person.

NNA also reported that an Israeli airstrike on Monday killed six in the southern village of Marwaniyeh.

Israeli forces recently made their deepest incursion into Lebanon in 26 years, but Beirut has been mostly spared over the past six weeks, apart from two targeted attacks on the city's southern suburbs in May.

Hezbollah said Tuesday its fighters fired anti-tank missiles on Israeli troops who were pushing into the southern village of Hadatha, about 7km from the Israeli border. Sirens sounded in several areas in northern Israel, the military said in a statement, adding that "a suspicious aerial target" was identified in the area in which Israeli soldiers are operating in southern Lebanon, and that no injuries were reported.

The latest exchanges came as a second round of talks between Israel and Lebanon is scheduled for Tuesday and Wednesday in Washington, where Lebanese negotiators are set to seek a full ceasefire that will prevent future attacks. —*PTI*

Rescuers at the site of an Israeli airstrike that damaged a hospital in the southern port city of Tyre, Lebanon, on Monday —*PTI*

Ultra-orthodox groups protest Israel's conscription

JERUSALEM, 2 JUNE

Tens of thousands of ultra-Orthodox Jews protested across Israel on Monday against mandatory military service, blocking roads, disrupting train services and setting vehicles on fire.

Police said demonstrators blocked major intersections and assaulted a soldier near a protest site. Authorities used water cannons and mounted units to disperse crowds as protests paralysed parts of Jerusalem and the Tel Aviv metropolitan area.

The demonstrations come amid growing pressure to end exemptions that allow many ultra-Orthodox men to avoid military service and instead study in religious seminaries. The issue has strained Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's coalition after ultra-Orthodox parties withdrew support over the matter.

Israel's military, facing manpower shortages due to operations in Gaza, Lebanon, Syria and conflict with Iran, is seeking more recruits. Around 13,000 ultra-Orthodox men reach conscription age annually, but fewer than 10 per cent enlist.

Many protesters argued that military service threatens their religious way of life. The Supreme Court ruled the exemptions illegal in 2017, but they have remained in place through repeated extensions and government delays. —*PTI*

Israeli mounted police disperse Ultra-Orthodox Jews blocking a road during a protest against the army draft in Jerusalem, on Monday —*PTI*

US, British soldiers die during training exercise in Iraq

WASHINGTON, 2 JUNE

An American and a British soldier died during a training exercise in Iraq, US and UK officials confirmed Monday, without providing further details. The incident occurred Sunday at an air base in Irbil, in northern Iraq's Kurdish region, where the US maintains a presence. The US Army said the soldier's identity is being withheld until 24 hours after family notification. The UK's Ministry of Defence stated the family of the British soldier has been informed and requested a "period of grace" before releasing more details. The US is reducing troops in Iraq but retains a presence in the Kurdish region, highlighting ongoing strategic ties. —*PTI*

— MAGNIFIC

Man in Iowa kills 6 of his family, then himself

IOWA, 2 JUNE

Six people were killed in Muscatine, Iowa, during a shooting spree, police reported Monday, with initial findings indicating a domestic dispute. Authorities identified the gunman as Ryan Willis McFarland, 52, who killed six members of his family across three locations before dying from a self-inflicted gunshot wound. The police said they responded after receiving a report of a shooting around 12.12pm. Four victims were found dead at the residence, believed to be family members of McFarland. He was later found on the Riverfront Trail with a gunshot wound and pronounced dead. The investigation remains active, and police urge anyone with information to contact them. —*ANI*

YOU'D BE IN PRISON IF NOT FOR ME: TRUMP ALLEGEDLY TELLS BIBI

WASHINGTON, 2 JUNE

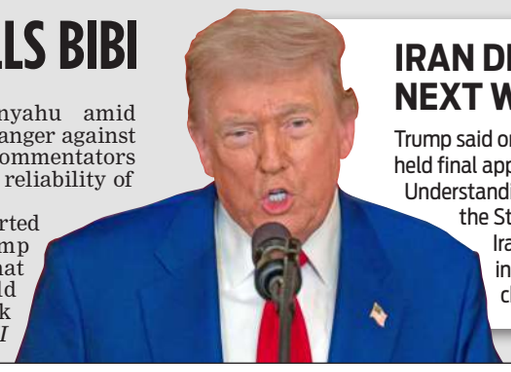
Tempers apparently flew during Trump's phone call with Netanyahu, where the Republican allegedly swore at the Israeli Prime Minister whilst attempting to persuade him to halt strikes on Lebanon, US media outlet Axios reported.

"You're f***ing crazy," Trump reportedly told Netanyahu, Axios claimed, citing unnamed US sources. "You'd be in prison if it weren't for me. I'm saving your a••. Everybody hates you now. Everybody hates Israel because of this."

A second source told Axios that Trump was "pissed" and at one point yelled at Netanyahu: "What the f••• are you doing?" Another official told the outlet Trump had "steamrolled" Netanyahu during the call.

Salar has been unable to verify the report. Notably, US media outlets have published stories about Trump and former president Joe Biden telling off Netanyahu amid growing public anger against Israel, with commentators questioning the reliability of such reports.

After the reported call, Trump announced that Israel would not attack Beirut. —*PTI*



IRAN DEAL LIKELY NEXT WEEK: TRUMP

Trump said on ABC News that he has withheld final approval on a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) aimed at unblocking the Strait of Hormuz in a deal with Iran over a "few more points", but indicated that a deal was likely chokepoint "over the next week".

Russia launched 73 missiles and 656 drones at Ukraine, with a bulk of the munitions targetting Kyiv, on Tuesday —*UKRAINE EMERGENCY SERVICES*

18 killed, dozens trapped after Russian strikes on Ukraine

KYIV, 2 JUNE

At least 18 civilians were killed and 131 others injured during a massive Russian air assault on Ukraine overnight into Tuesday, authorities said.

The damage trapped some people under the rubble of apartment buildings. Emergency crews digging through the wreckage pulled out the body of a three-year-old child and the bodies of a mother and her eight-year-old son in the central Ukrainian city of Dnipro, officials said.

The attack stretched from night into day and the boom of explosions reverberated across cities.

Kyiv residents had been on edge for days after Russia warned that a massive aerial attack was coming and warned foreign diplomats to leave the Ukrainian capital. None appeared to heed the call. In the capital alone, some 64 people were wounded.

Russia unleashed 73 missiles and 656 drones across Ukraine, according to the country's air force, with the main targets including Kyiv, the central city of Dnipro, and the eastern cities of Poltava, Kharkiv and Zaporizhzhia. Ukrainian air defence forces destroyed or suppressed 40 missiles and 602 drones, but hits were recorded in at least 15 regions.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said that "If Ukraine is not protected from ballistic missiles and other missile strikes", such massive strikes would continue, as his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putting has stepped up the aerial campaign against Ukraine, recently launching a powerful hypersonic Oreshnik ballistic missile for only the third time in the four-year war.

Putin said on Tuesday that Ukraine's drone attack last week on a college dormitory in occupied- Luhansk that killed 21 had given the war "a whole new dimension."

The US-led peace efforts have fizzled out with the West turning its attention to the Iran war. —*PTI*

On honeymoon, Indian pilot dies in chopper crash

DAWSONVILLE, 2 JUNE

A tragic incident has claimed the life of Indian-origin pilot Dave Fiji, 26, just hours after his wedding, in a helicopter crash. The Delta Air Lines pilot, with family roots in Keralam, was travelling with his wife Jessni, a nurse, on their honeymoon when the Robinson R66 helicopter crashed near their wedding venue. Jessni survived with cuts and bruises and is recovering in a metro Atlanta hospital. Dave's father, George Fiji, recalled that their wedding held at The Revere in Dawsonville with around 400 guests.

The couple had just left their wedding reception, heading to DeKalb-Peachtree Airport, when the crash occurred. Jessni was trapped in the wreckage for six hours before rescue.

Dave had expressed concerns about weather before takeoff, but the pilot allegedly decided to fly at higher altitude despite zero visibility. —*Agencies*

30 illegal Indian truckers in US arrested, to be deported

Indian-origin truck drivers have been implicated in several of the recent high-profile crashes in the US —*ANI*

NEW YORK, 2 JUNE

About 30 people from India, found to be living in the US illegally and working as commercial truck drivers, have been arrested as part of a federal operation and will soon be deported, US Customs and Border Protection said in a statement on Monday.

Border Patrol agents from Yuma Sector in Arizona arrested 52 individuals during 'Operation Checkmate' between 11-13 May for being in the US illegally, including 36 who were found to be driving semi-trucks, the statement said. Out of the 36 illegal semi-truck drivers arrested, 30 were from India, while the rest were from were from Mexico, El Salvador, and Russia.

They had commercial driver's licenses from states such as California, New York, Washington and Virginia, while some did not possess any form of driver's license. Most possessed employment authorisation documents, which were obtained during the Joe Biden administration and were no longer valid.

- They had commercial driver's licenses from states such as California, New York, Washington and Virginia, while some did not possess any form of driver's license.

Operation Checkmate is aimed at enhancing public safety through enforcement of immigration statutes to detect and arrest illegal persons operating commercial motor vehicles in the country, the statement claimed.

Several Indian-origin truck drivers have been arrested for causing fatal crashes in the US recently. —*PTI*

Ro Khanna backs resolution against 'Hinduphobia'

US Congressman Ro Khanna endorsed a House resolution that celebrates the contributions of the Hindu-American community to the economy of the United States and condemns Hinduphobia, anti-Hindu bigotry and attacks on the community's places of worship. The resolution was moved on 24 January last year by Democrat Congressman Shri Thanedar and has been co-sponsored by 32 lawmakers.

Pentagon bars journalists from its press office

The Defence Department has declared that its press office is now a classified space inaccessible to journalists. Acting Pentagon Press Secretary Joel Valdez stated on X that there was "nothing controversial" about it and that it came because speechwriters, who use classified material, were now occupying the space. The move comes amid the government's frequent clashes with the press.

— WIKIPEDIA

Frederiksen to begin third term as PM of Denmark

COPENHAGEN, 2 JUNE

Social Democrat Mette Frederiksen will commence her third term as Denmark's Prime Minister, leading a centre-left coalition after two months of negotiations. The government includes the Moderate party of Lars Lokke Rasmussen, the Green Left, and the Danish Social Liberal Party, with the Danish Royal House confirming the agreement. Frederiksen stated the government will work for "the people of Denmark, for the generations to come and for the animals." Her new government's priorities will be announced on Tuesday, with ministers named on Wednesday. The 48-year-old has supported Ukraine and held a restrictive stance on migration. —*PTI*

Lankan ex-prez to testify on activists' disappearances

COLOMBO, 2 JUNE

Former Sri Lankan president Gotabaya Rajapaksa was permitted to testify online at a long-standing case concerning the disappearance of two rights activists in 2011. During his presidency, Rajapaksa was accused of overseeing abduction squads that targeted Tamil civilians, rebels, journalists, and activists, many of whom vanished. The activists, Lalith Kumar Weeraraju and Kugan Muruganandan, were planning a protest on human rights violations before their disappearance. He had previously appealed that he felt unsafe travelling to Jaffna for a court appearance. The case revisits allegations linked to the end of Sri Lanka's civil war in 2009, where the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) was defeated. —*PTI*

SUPPORT BOLSONARO'S SON?

US aims to influence Brazil's polls by labelling gangs terrorist organisations: Experts

RIO DE JANEIRO, 1 JUNE

The US decision to classify two Brazilian gangs as terrorist organisations is a political one aimed at boosting an ally of President Donald Trump – the son of former Brazilian president Jair Bolsonaro – say politicians and analysts.

The listing of First Capital Command (PCC) and Red Command (CV), followed a visit by presidential hopeful Sen Flavio Bolsonaro to Washington last week. He said he asked Trump administration officials to extend the designation to them. Flavio hopes to unseat incumbent President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva in October's elections. The US decision shores up the senator's tough-on-crime credentials.

President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva and contestant Flavio Bolsonaro —*WIKIPEDIA*

US to impose 25% tariffs on Brazil for 'unfair trade practices'... again

"The main driver of this decision was politics, to pressure Lula and help Flavio prior to the October election," said expert Brian Winter.

Lula has protested the US decision, saying that Brazil is taking care of its own issues, as shown by recent arrests and an ongoing investigation into PCC. "We will not accept being treated as if we were a banana republic".

"(Bolsonaro) will be able to hit hard against Lula's Achilles heel, public security," said Creomar de Souza, a political analyst.

Flavio, like his father, has advocated for the US under Trump to replace China as Brazil's main trade partner. —*PTI*

'Pakistan sees 27% increase in terror attacks in May'

ISLAMABAD, 2 JUNE

Militancy-driven violence spiked 27 per cent in Pakistan in May compared to April, according to a security assessment report released on Monday by think tank Pakistan Institute for Conflict and Security Studies (PICSS). The report says that the country witnessed 128 terrorist attacks during May, compared to 101 attacks in April.

Balochistan province recorded 71 terrorist attacks, compared with 34 in April, representing a 109 per cent increase – the highest.

Civilian fatalities increased from 37 in April to 71 in May, representing a 92 per cent rise. Security personnel fatalities surged from 28 to 68, marking a 143 per cent increase.

The country also witnessed six suicide attacks during May, whereas only one each was recorded in March and April.

Meanwhile, security forces killed 270 militants and arrested 15 others during the month.

This comes after repeated strikes between Pakistan and Afghanistan. With the situation escalating into "open war" Pakistan accused Afghanistan of allowing terrorists to use its soil to launch attacks. —*PTI*

Rupee closes at 95.29, down 10 paise against USD

MUMBAI, 2 JUNE

The rupee fell 10 paise to close at 95.29 (provisional) against the US dollar. Global crude oil prices surged, and the US dollar remained strong amid safe-haven inflows. It opened at 95.16, touching a high of 95.03 and a low of 95.31. Anuj Choudhary of Mirae Asset said, "We expect the rupee to trade with a negative bias on renewed tensions and crude prices, but peace talks may prevent a sharp fall." The RBI's monetary policy meeting is scheduled for 3-5 June, with the USDINR expected to trade between 94.90 and 95.50. The dollar index was at 99.12, and Brent crude was USD 94.30 per barrel. *—PTI*

—FREEPIK

Gold rebounds Rs 1,050, silver gains Rs 1,300

NEW DELHI, 2 JUNE

Gold prices rose Rs 1,050 to Rs 1.61 lakh per 10 grams amid firm global markets and a weak US dollar. The All India Sarafa Association reported the yellow metal of 99.9 per cent purity appreciated from Rs 1,60,400 to Rs 1,61,450. Silver increased Rs 1,300 to Rs 2,71,000 per kilogram. Internationally, spot gold gained 1 per cent to USD 4,528.75 per ounce, while silver rose 2 per cent to USD 76.29. Saumil Gandhi of HDFC Securities explained, "Prices fluctuated within a range as investors sought clarity on geopolitical developments and US economic data, with a pullback in crude oil and softer Treasury yields supporting prices." *—PTI*

Mother Dairy gets biodegradable milk pouches

NEW DELHI, 2 JUNE

Mother Dairy has unveiled India's first naturally degradable milk pouch, demonstrating its commitment to environment and sustainability. The new packaging transforms into bioavailable wax, broken down by soil microbes, leaving no plastic trace. "The newly introduced packaging is designed to naturally degrade in soil within a few years rather than centuries, and importantly, this transition is being undertaken without any impact on consumer milk prices," said Meenesh Shah, NDDB Chairman. Starting 5 June, the pouch will be used for its cow milk in Delhi-NCR. Jayatheertha Chary, MD, added, "We undertook over four years of research to develop this pouch." Mother Dairy, founded in 1974, also produces dairy and food products under various brands. *—PTI*

—OLA

Ola Electric fixes Rs 37.74 floor price for QIP

NEW DELHI, 2 JUNE

Ola Electric's fund-raising committee approved the launch of its Qualified Institutions Placement (QIP) on 1 June, setting the floor price at Rs 37.74 per share. The electric vehicle manufacturer began the capital raising following prior approvals from its board and shareholders. The placement involves equity shares with a Rs 10 face value, offered to eligible institutional buyers. An Ola Electric exchange filing confirmed the immediate opening of the issue, with a preliminary placement document and application form available. The floor price was calculated based on SEBI regulations, with 1 June, 2026, as the relevant date. *—ANI*

South Korea overtakes India as world's 6th largest stock mkt

NEW DELHI, 2 JUNE

South Korea has overtaken India to become the world's sixth-largest equity market by value. A report by Bloomberg said that the combined market value of companies listed in South Korea has climbed by 86 per cent in 2026 to reach USD 5 trillion, while India's market capitalisation has declined to USD 4.8 trillion.

This comes after Taiwan overtook India last week to become the world's fifth largest stock market.

The boom in both countries has been driven by the global surge in Artificial Intelligence (AI) technologies, leading to an increased demand for semiconductor chips, which they have spent decades investing state-supported and export-oriented resources in.

Samsung Electronics and SK Hynix both crossed the USD 1 trillion valuation mark due to their prime position in AI memory-chip technology, leading to South Korea's equity market expansion.

Similarly, Taiwan's rise in the global rankings is linked to Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company (TSMC), which represents 42 per cent of the local benchmark index. The company's shares have risen by a whopping 46 per cent this year due to its leading position in the manufacture of semi-conductor chips.

Meanwhile, India is dealing with adverse conditions, such as a weakening rupee, withdrawal of foreign investment and a lesser presence of AI-related companies. Furthermore, India's participation in the AI ecosystem is via service firms such as Tata Consultancy Services, Infosys, Wipro and HCL Technologies. They help organisations deploy AI solutions rather than manufacture the chips themselves. India does not have the large-scale domestic production system that South Korea and Taiwan have, which means India has not attracted global investors that put their money on AI hardware. *—Salar News*

Higher petrol, diesel prices threaten to rekindle inflation

Since 15 May, fuel prices have been hiked by Rs 7.5/L

NEW DELHI, 2 JUNE

Rising petrol and diesel prices are expected to add fresh inflationary pressures to the Indian economy. This is as higher transport and manufacturing costs feed through to consumer prices in the coming months, according to a Crisil report released on Tuesday.

Petrol and diesel prices have risen by around Rs 7.5 per litre since 15 May, with further increases likely if global crude oil prices remain elevated. Crisil said cumulative hikes could approach Rs 10 per litre as oil marketing companies continue to reduce under-recoveries.

The direct impact of a Rs 7.5-per-litre increase is estimated to add 36 basis points to Consumer Price Index (CPI) inflation, rising to nearly 48 basis points if fuel prices increase by Rs 10 per litre.

Beyond the immediate effect, higher fuel costs are expected to raise freight and logistics expenses. Road transport, which accounts for around 71 per cent of India's freight movement, is particularly vulnerable, with fuel making up roughly 42 per cent of operating costs.

Food categories heavily dependent on transport networks—including dairy products, tea, coffee, fruits, pulses, spices, eggs, meat and fish—are likely to face the strongest impact, potentially accelerating food inflation as favourable base effects fade.

Core inflation could also come under pressure as manufacturers grapple with rising costs for crude oil, petroleum products, natural gas and transportation. Transport-intensive sectors such as clothing, consumer electronics, wood products, cement and ceramics may see greater price pass-through, while chemical, coal and metal-related industries could face higher input costs.

Although GST cuts introduced in September 2025 on electronics, automobiles, clothing, processed foods and FMCG products may help moderate inflation, analysts believe they will not fully offset higher energy costs.

Crisil expects headline inflation to rise from current levels but remain within the Reserve Bank of India's 2–6 per cent tolerance band. The RBI is also monitoring monsoon risks and evolving El Niño conditions, which could further affect food prices. *—PTI*

OVERSUBSCRIBED 3.47 TIMES

NHPC stocks down over 5% as govt starts selling stake

NEW DELHI, 2 JUNE

Shares of NHPC Ltd fell more than 5 per cent on Tuesday after the government launched an Offer for Sale (OFS) to divest up to a 6 per cent stake in the state-owned hydropower company.

NHPC shares were trading at Rs 72.84 on the BSE, down 5.64 per cent. The government has set a floor price of Rs 71 per share, representing an 8 per cent discount to Monday's closing price of Rs 77.19. The stock had already declined 2.07 per cent on Monday from its previous close.

However, the OFS was oversubscribed 3.47 times on the first day.

The OFS opened for non-retail investors on Tuesday and will open for retail investors on Wednesday.

The government is offering more than 60.27 crore shares, equivalent to a 6 per cent stake in NHPC, formerly known as the National Hydroelectric Power Corporation and India's leading state-owned hydropower utility. At the floor price, the sale is expected to raise around Rs 4,200 crore for the exchequer.

- The NHPC stake sale marks the third public sector OFS in the current financial year. Last week, the government sold a 2 per cent stake in Coal India.

The NHPC stake sale marks the third public sector OFS in the current financial year. Last week, the government sold a 2 per cent stake in Coal India through an OFS, raising Rs 5,542 crore. In May, it divested 8.08 per cent in Central Bank of India, garnering Rs 2,266 crore.

With these transactions, total disinvestment proceeds in FY27 have reached Rs 7,808 crore. *—PTI*

ED raids Vedanta Group in FEMA case

NEW DELHI, 2 JUNE

The Enforcement Directorate has initiated a foreign exchange "violation" investigation against billionaire **Anil Agarwal**'s Vedanta Group and conducted searches at its official premises, officials said on Tuesday.

The raids were launched against the global mining conglomerate on Monday and four premises of Vedanta Ltd, including those located in Delhi, Mumbai and Udaipur in Rajasthan, were surveyed, officials told PTI.

The investigation is being conducted under the civil provisions of the Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA).

An instance of Vedanta Resources, the London-based parent of Indian company Vedanta Ltd., refunding a part of the brand fee to the latter (Vedanta Ltd.) in 2023 is under the scanner of the federal probe agency, the officials said.

The ongoing probe is also looking at some other structures of the group, the officials said.

A Vedanta spokesperson confirmed the ED action to PTI, saying the company was "extending full cooperation to the authorities and are providing all information sought."

Vedanta Ltd is a leading global producer of metals, critical minerals and technology. The company has operations across India, Africa, the Middle East and East Asia.

The board of the company recently approved a demerger of Vedanta companies which are planned for listing as four entities: Vedanta Aluminium Metal Limited (VAML), Talwandi Sabo Power Ltd (TSPL), Malco Energy Ltd (MEL), and Vedanta Iron and Steel Limited (VISL). *—PTI*

Mkts snap 4-day losses led by rally in IT

MUMBAI, 2 JUNE

Snapping the four-day losing streak, benchmark BSE Sensex rebounded by 382 points on Tuesday following a strong rally in IT shares.

The 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 382.50 points, or 0.52 per cent, to settle at 74,649.84 with 20 of its constituents ending higher and 10 with losses. The barometer jumped 1,047.07 points to 74,862.19 from its intra-day low of 73,815.12.

The 50-share NSE Nifty rose by 100.95 points, or 0.43 per cent, to end at 23,483.55.

Among 30 Sensex firms, Tata Consultancy Services jumped the most by 6.53 per cent. Infosys climbed 5.66 per cent, HCL Tech by 4.08 per cent and Tech Mahindra by 1.76 per cent. Adani Ports, Titan, Eternal, HDFC Bank and Mahindra & Mahindra were also among the gainers.

NTPC, Axis Bank, Power Grid and ICICI Bank were among the laggards.

Among indices, IT surged the most by 4.40 per cent, followed by Focused IT (3.83 per cent), Consumer Durables (1.23 per cent), Services (1.11 per cent), Telecommunication (0.95 per cent), MidSmall Private Banks Quality Tilt (0.93 per cent), Consumer Discretionary (0.83 per cent), FMCG (0.72 per cent) and Auto (0.68 per cent).

Power, Utilities, Financial Services and Oil & Gas were the laggards.

A total of 2,301 stocks advanced, while 1,904 declined and 172 remained unchanged on the BSE.

Meanwhile, FIIs offloaded equities worth Rs 3,911.68 crore on Monday. *—PTI*

CRUDE OIL TUMBLES

Crude oil prices fell to Rs 8,697 per barrel in futures trade, tracking losses in global benchmarks even as investors remained cautious over the fluid geopolitical situation involving US and Iran. Globally, Brent oil futures for August contract fell 1 per cent at USD 94.03 per barrel, while West Texas Intermediate slipped 1.10 per cent to USD 91 per barrel. *—PTI*

Coca-Cola mulls IPO of bottling unit

NEW DELHI, 2 JUNE

Coca-Cola is exploring the listing of Hindustan Coca-Cola Holdings Pvt Ltd (HCCH), its Indian parent company, on the BSE and NSE in 2027, a company statement announced. It is also contemplating selling a stake in HCCH. "Initial preparations are underway for a potential listing on the Bombay Stock Exchange and National Stock Exchange of India, subject to market conditions and applicable regulatory and other approvals," the statement said.

This follows nearly a year after Coca-Cola sold its 40 per cent stake in HCCH to Jubilant Bhartia Group, with financial details yet to be disclosed. The global Coca-Cola statement clarified, "It is exploring a potential public listing in India of HCCH, the parent company of the largest Coca-Cola bottler in India, Hindustan Coca-Cola Beverages Pvt Ltd (HCCB), in 2027, and the sale of a portion of its shareholding in HCCH in connection with the listing."

This move aims to complete the refranchising of HCCH and position it for growth in India's expanding market. Coca-Cola's asset-light strategy involves divesting bottling assets worldwide. In 2024, the company refranchised its bottling operations in Rajasthan, Bihar, Northeast, and parts of West Bengal, earning around Rs 2,420 crore. *—PTI*

Adani reports record Rs 1.52L cr capex for 2026

NEW DELHI, 2 JUNE

The Adani Group has announced its highest annual capex by any Indian firm at Rs 1.52 lakh crore (USD 16.1 billion) for 2026. Nearly 80 per cent of this was invested in core sectors such as energy, utilities, transport, and logistics. An official release states that this increased the total asset base to Rs 7,85,098 crore (USD 82.8 billion). The year saw the operationalisation of assets including 5.1 GW renewable energy and 1.38 GWh of battery storage, later scaling to 3.37 GWh.

Projects like Navi Mumbai International Airport, Guwahati Terminal, and Ganga Expressway entered operations, alongside a new copper smelter. The group expects these assets to contribute to growth and earnings. The portfolio achieved a record EBITDA of Rs 94,834 crore (USD 10 billion), with 87 per cent from core infrastructure.

Despite high capex, leverage remained below 3.5x, with 60 per cent equity funding and Rs 55,852 crore cash as of March 2026. The group's assets now carry an 'A-' rating or higher, and borrowing costs dropped to 7.8 per cent from 9 per cent two years ago. *—ANI*

HATHAWAY GETS $10B STOCK

Alphabet to sell $80B in stock to fund AI spending spree

NEW DELHI, 2 JUNE

Google's parent company, Alphabet, announced a proposed USD 80 billion equity capital raise to expand AI infrastructure and compute, driven by unprecedented customer demand.

The extensive capital initiative splits across multiple financial instruments. Alphabet will launch concurrent underwritten public offerings worth USD 30 billion, divided evenly between USD 15 billion in depositary shares representing mandatory convertible preferred stock and USD 15 billion in Class A and Class C stock. Furthermore, an ATM (at-the-market) offering program targeting USD 40 billion for Class A and Class C stock will commence in the third quarter of 2026.

Alphabet also reached a specific agreement to sell USD 10 billion of stock to Berkshire Hathaway Inc. in a private placement. This transaction comprises USD 5 billion in Class A Common Stock at a price of USD 351.81 per share and USD 5 billion in Class C Capital Stock at a price of USD 348.20 per share, adding to a position Berkshire has consistently built since the third quarter of 2025.

The tech giant outlined that the net proceeds from both will go toward capital expenditures to scale its AI infrastructure and global compute, as it is experiencing strong demand for its AI solutions and services from enterprises and consumers at levels that are exceeding the company's available supply. *—ANI*

Blackstone's largest ever Asia fund closes at $13.1B

NEW DELHI, 2 JUNE

Blackstone has announced the closing of its Asia private equity fund at $13.1 billion, surpassing the $10 billion target and becoming the largest in the region. The fund, Blackstone Capital Partners Asia III, closed at more than double its predecessor. Joe Baratta, Blackstone's Global Head of Private Equity Strategies, said the successful raise reflects the strength of their platform and ability to perform through cycles.

He added, "Asia Pacific is the fastest-growing region in the world, presenting compelling opportunities to invest at scale behind high-conviction themes and deliver for our investors." Over two years, Blackstone invested $7 billion across 12 transactions in India and Japan, including Neysa AI, TechnoPro, and JUNO.

The firm also made 15 exits, including the listing of the International Gemological Institute and Aadhar Housing Finance. Amit Dixit, Head of Asia, highlighted their scale and proactive strategy, with over $1.3 trillion in assets under management across various strategies. *—ANI*

- The fund, Blackstone Capital Partners Asia III, closed at more than double its predecessor.

ICC suspension unexpected: Cricket Canada

TORONTO, 2 JUNE

Cricket Canada described the ICC's suspension as "unexpected" but confirmed it has begun corrective measures to address governance and financial issues. The ICC's Board suspended Cricket Canada for "serious breaches" but clarified that Canadian teams remain eligible for ICC events. Cricket Canada stated, "The suspension was unexpected. We respect the ICC's decision and are committed to meeting all compliance requirements," and has undertaken "immediate, comprehensive, and structured corrective measures." The suspension follows an ICC investigation into allegations of corruption, highlighted in a CBC documentary. Despite the suspension, Canada's national teams can still participate in ICC tournaments. The ICC will monitor progress and set conditions for reinstatement. Cricket Canada remains committed to the sport's growth in the country—*PTI*

India's Abhay Singh and Veer Chotrani exit

BIRMINGHAM, 2 JUNE

India's Abhay Singh and Veer Chotrani exited the British Open squash after losing in the second round to top-ranked players. Abhay, ranked 24th, was narrowly defeated by Egypt's Mohamad Zakaria, 9-11, 4-11, 11-7, 10-12. Chotrani, ranked 40th, lost to Welshman Joel Makin, 12-10, 11-9, 11-3. Anahat Singh and Ramit Tandon had already been eliminated in the first round last week. The tournament saw top players advance, but the Indian duo's exit marked an end to their hopes in this year's competition.—*PTI*

— PTI

Atiqa Mir achieves record-breaking victory in Greece

THESSALONIKI, 2 JUNE

Eleven-year-old Atiqa Mir has cemented her reputation as India's top young racer with her most commanding victory in Round 2 of the Champions of the Future Academy Program. She dominated in the OK-NJ category, sweeping qualifying, heats, and finals. The first Indian supported by the Formula 1 Academy, Atiqa set a record qualifying time of 56.77 seconds, almost three-tenths ahead of the runner-up. She won the final by over 2.6 seconds, a significant margin in motorsport. Born in Mumbai with roots in Jammu and Kashmir, Atiqa's emotional reaction during the Indian national anthem highlighted her pride. Her father, Asif Mir, a former Formula Asia vice-champion, praised her pace and professionalism, calling it a proud moment for Indian motorsport.—*PTI*

Southampton backs manager Eckert amid row

SOUTHAMPTON, 2 JUNE

Southampton owner Dragan Šolak stated that Tonda Eckert will remain as manager despite the Spygate controversy, which led to the club's expulsion from the Championship playoffs. Southampton was expelled after admitting to spying on opponents' training sessions and receiving a four-point deduction for next season. An arbitration panel described Eckert's role as part of a "contrived plan from top down," with the club's analysts pressured to carry out unauthorized observations. Šolak expressed full backing for Eckert, saying, "He is the man to take us forward," adding, "We only have one objective — promotion back to the Premier League." He also told the BBC that Eckert "deserves a second chance," despite the scandal.—*PTI*

Praggs, Gukesh, Divya keep title hopes alive

Despite his win, Gukesh remains at 6th rank in Norway

OSLO, 2 JUNE

India's chess prodigies struck back in style during Round 7 of Norway Chess, reigniting the country's challenge as the prestigious tournament enters its decisive phase.

In the open section, world champion D Gukesh salvaged 1.5 points against American Grandmaster Wesley So. Playing with White, Gukesh engineered a winning classical position by activating his king. However, severe time trouble, having just 18 minutes to So's hour, forced a draw. Gukesh made amends in the Armageddon tie-break, utilising sharp calculation and a courageous queenside pawn grab to seal victory. Despite the win, he remains sixth with eight points.

Compatriot R Praggnanandhaa climbed to nine points after handing France's Alireza Firouzja a second successive classical defeat. Praggnanandhaa seized an extra pawn by move 26 and launched a full-blooded attack. With Alireza reduced to two minutes, the Indian converted his command into a maximum three-point haul, placing him joint-third alongside world No. 1 Magnus Carlsen and Germany's Vincent Keymer. Carlsen maintained his late-surge reputation by defeating Keymer in their Armageddon tie-break.

In the open section, world champion D Gukesh salvaged 1.5 points against American Grandmaster Wesley—*PTI*

Wesley So continues to lead the open standings with 12.5 points, followed by Alireza on 10. However, with three rounds remaining, both Indians stay within touching distance of the leaders.

In the women's tournament, Divya Deshmukh bounced back spectacularly to defeat veteran compatriot Koneru Humpy.

After a drawn classical encounter where Divya admitted to "seeing ghosts" and hallucinating away a winning position, the World Cup winner fearlessly struck in the Armageddon tie-break.

The victory takes Divya to 10 points, keeping her firmly in the title hunt. She remains 2.5 points behind Kazakh leader Bibisara Assaubayeva, who maintained her blazing form by defeating China's Zhu Jiner in classical chess to reach 12.5 points. Divya now faces a critical Round 8 clash against Assaubayeva, where a classical victory could see the Indian overtake the tournament leader. —*PTI*

Aryna Sabalenka of Belarus reacts after winning the fourth-round tennis match against Japan's Naomi Osaka at the French Open in Paris —*PTI*

SABALENKA ENDS OSAKA'S FRENCH OPEN DREAM

PARIS, 2 JUNE

Top-ranked Aryna Sabalenka defeated Naomi Osaka 7-5, 6-3 on Monday to reach the French Open quarterfinals, moving closer to the clay-court Grand Slam title she missed out on in last year's final against Coco Gauff.

In the first women's night match at Roland Garros in three years, following criticism over scheduling, four-time major champion Sabalenka overpowered Osaka from the baseline in 1 hour and 27 minutes. Sabalenka will next face Diana Shnaider, who eliminated Madison Keys, the last American woman in contention, 6-3, 3-6, 6-0.

French hopes evaporated after Diane Parry lost 6-3, 6-2 to Polish qualifier Maja Chwalinska. Ranked 114th, Chwalinska faces Anna Kalinskaya, who defeated Anastasia Potapova 6-4, 2-6, 7-6 (10-7). Top seeds Gauff, Iga Swiatek, and Elena Rybakina are already out.

In the men's draw, despite Jannik Sinner's early exit, three Italian men advanced to the quarterfinals. Tenth-seeded Flavio Cobolli reached his first Paris quarterfinal by beating American Zachary Svajda 6-2, 6-3, 6-7 (3), 7-6 (5). Cobolli next plays fourth seed Felix Auger-Aliassime, who completed a career set of Grand Slam quarterfinals by defeating Alejandro Tabilo 6-3, 7-5, 6-1.

Matteo Berrettini made his first Roland Garros quarterfinal appearance since 2021 following an injury-plagued period, beating Juan Manuel Cerundolo 6-3, 7-6 (2), 7-6 (6). He will face compatriot Matteo Arnaldi, who defeated Frances Tiafoe — the last American man remaining — 7-6 (5), 6-7 (5), 3-6, 7-6 (3), 6-4 in an epic 5-hour, 26-minute battle.

The all-Italian clash at least guarantees the nation a semi-finalist. —*PTI*

Sindhu advances to 2nd round; Srikanth exits Indonesia Open

JAKARTA, 2 JUNE

Two-time Olympic medallist PV Sindhu battled her way into the second round of the Indonesia Open with a straight-game win, while former world No. 1 Kidambi Srikanth suffered an opening-round exit here on Tuesday.

Sindhu was made to work hard by Thailand's Busanan Ongbamrungphan before prevailing 25-23, 21-16 in a 51-minute women's singles round of 32 contest of the Super 1000 badminton tournament. The former world champion displayed her trademark attacking game to edge a closely fought opening game before carrying the momentum into the second to complete a straight-game win.

Sindhu was made to work hard by Thailand's Busanan Ongbamrungphan before prevailing 25-23, 21-16 —*PTI*

The unseeded Indian is now likely to face reigning Olympic champion and World No. 1 An Se-young, who she had lost to in the quarterfinals last week in Singapore last week, in the second round. Sindhu has a dismal 0-9 head to head record against An.

However, it was a disappointing day for Srikanth, who bowed out after a 19-21, 15-21 defeat to Japan's Yushi Tanaka in the men's singles opening round. —*PTI*

FIH WOMEN'S NATIONS CUP

Lalthantluangi, Dabas earn call-ups

NEW DELHI, 2 JUNE

Young defenders Lalthantluangi and Shilpi Dabas will once again be a part of Salima Tete-led national team which will take part in the FIH Hockey Women's Nations Cup New Zealand scheduled to begin in Auckland from 15 to 21 June.

India have been placed in Pool A of the tournament alongside Japan, United States and Uruguay, with Pool B comprising hosts New Zealand, Chile, Korea and France.

India will open their Nations Cup campaign against the United States on 15 June, before facing Japan a day later. They will round off their pool stage with a clash against Uruguay on Thursday, 18 June. The semi-finals are scheduled for Saturday, June 20 and the final on June 21.

Tete will continue to lead the side for the tournament. Savita and Bichu Devi Kharibam will provide the team with reliable options for goalkeeping. —*PTI*

India favourites to win women's T20 WC: Anjum Chopra

AHMEDABAD, 2 JUNE

Former India captain Anjum Chopra believes the Indian women's team will start among the favourites for the upcoming T20 World Cup, saying English conditions are no longer unfamiliar territory for the side.

India begin their campaign against Pakistan in Birmingham on June 14. Chopra said most members of the current squad have considerable experience of playing in England, making adaptation less of a challenge.

She also welcomed the return of wicketkeeper-batter Yastika Bhatia from injury. Yastika marked her comeback with a 54 off 40 balls in the opening T20I against England and has strengthened her claim for the No. 3 spot.

Chopra, however, urged the team management to maintain flexibility in the batting order, particularly with players such as Yastika, Jemimah Rodrigues and captain Harmanpreet Kaur vying for key roles.

India have been placed in a tough Group 1 alongside Australia, South Africa, Pakistan, Bangladesh and the Netherlands, with only two teams advancing to the semi-finals. Chopra cautioned against underestimating any opponent, highlighting the strength of Australia and South Africa and the improving standards of Pakistan and the Netherlands.

On the men's side, Chopra backed Rajat Patidar for an India T20I call-up after leading Royal Challengers Bengaluru to a second successive IPL title, describing him as a highly skilled batter

She also said teenage batting sensation Vaibhav Sooryavanshi's biggest challenge would be handling the attention. —*PTI*

COMEBACK TRAIL

Serena Williams is coming back to tennis at 44

PARIS, 2 JUNE

- Williams won seven Wimbledon titles and six at the US Open before stepping away

Serena Williams is coming back to professional tennis at the age of 44, returning to the sport she dominated for two decades before famously "evolving" away from the daily grind of competition.

First up for the 23-time Grand Slam singles champion is the doubles tournament at Queen's Club. But Wimbledon and the US Open could be next.

"It seems like she's trying to work her way up maybe to the US Open, and those fans would be so ready to see her back on a singles court there," former No. 1 Lindsay Davenport said at the French Open after the WTA Tour announced Monday that Williams has accepted a wild-card invitation to play doubles at next week's grass-court tournament in London.

Williams won seven Wimbledon titles and six at the US Open before stepping away from the game in 2022. In doubles, she won six titles at Wimbledon and two at the US Open — all with her older sister Venus Williams. "She's a legend. It's inspiring to see," top-ranked Aryna Sabalenka said. "I'm excited to see her play and probably face her. ... It's very good news for tennis."

John McEnroe suggested Williams could compete in singles at Wimbledon, which starts June 28. "She's not getting any younger but she's Serena Williams so I bet you she would tell me about wanting to win the whole damn thing," McEnroe said in Paris. — *PTI*

BREAKTHROUGH

Auqib to bowl in India nets ahead of Afghan Test

MULLANPUR, 2 JUNE

Jammu and Kashmir seamer Auqib Nabi Dar, whose non-selection in the Indian Test squad invited widespread criticism, has been summoned by the team management along with six others to bowl in the nets ahead of the Test against Afghanistan starting 6 June.

"Yes Auqib Nabi has been asked to join the India nets. It is not just Auqib but there are six others, who have also been called to join the India nets. Due to extreme weather conditions, the two premier fast bowlers Mohammed Siraj and Prasidh Krishna can't go flat out in the nets after a gruelling three games in seven days with travel. The batters would need adequate practice," a BCCI source said.

Auqib, who got 60 wickets to become highest wicket-taker while guiding Jammu and Kashmir to Ranji Trophy triumph, was pipped by gangly Punjab paceman Gurnoor Brar in the Indian team.

The J&K medium pacer's omission had caused a furore with the ex-chairman of selection committee Vengsarkar questioning the value of Ranji Trophy if performances in the tournament weren't rewarded. It is understood that Auqib hasn't yet been included in the 15-member squad but he is among the stand- bys. —*PTI*

BCCI appoints Bahutule as spin bowling coach

MUMBAI, 2 JUNE

The BCCI on Tuesday appointed former India leg-spinner Sairaj Bahutule as the spin bowling coach of the senior men's national team.

Bahutule, 53, represented India in two Tests and eight ODIs and was most recently associated with Punjab Kings during the IPL. Announcing the appointment, the BCCI highlighted his extensive playing and coaching experience.

A stalwart of domestic cricket, Bahutule claimed 630 wickets and scored 6,176 runs in a first-class career spanning nearly two decades. Following his retirement, he served as head coach of Vidarbha, Kerala, Gujarat and Bengal, while also working as spin-bowling coach with IPL franchises Rajasthan Royals and Punjab Kings.

He was part of the BCCI's National Cricket Academy, now the Centre of Excellence, from 2021 to 2024 and played a significant role in India's player development pathway. Bahutule served as bowling coach of India's ICC Under-19 World Cup-winning team in 2022 and was also part of the support staff in the 2024 edition. He has additionally worked with India A and the senior team on multiple assignments.

His first assignment will be the one-off Test against Afghanistan in Mullanpur from June 6, where he will work closely with young Indian spinners Manav Suthar and Harsh Dubey. —*PTI*

India favourite in SAFF semi-final against Bhutan

MARGAO, 2 JUNE

- The win made India group winners, setting up a semi-final against Group A runners-up Bhutan. Bhutan proved tough opponents, pushing Nepal before losing 0-1

Five-time champions India are overwhelming favourites against Bhutan in their SAFF Women's Championship semi-final here on Wednesday, aiming for a place in the final after an impressive group-stage run. India topped Group B with six points from two matches, beginning with an 11-0 win over Maldives and then beating Bangladesh 3-0 — their first victory over the rivals in seven years. Pyari Xaxa, Lynda Kom Serto, and Malavika P scored, ending Bangladesh's recent dominance.

The win made India group winners, setting up a semi-final against Group A runners-up Bhutan. Bhutan proved tough opponents, pushing Nepal before losing 0-1 and securing their spot with disciplined defence. India will rely on their attacking depth, with 14 goals in two matches, and coach Crispin Chettri praised their defensive solidity. He said, "We need to maintain high physical and tactical strength across the full 90 minutes."

Chettri remains calm, stating, "I don't believe in putting the girls under pressure so they can play freely." The hosts will expect their experienced players to perform in the knockout stages. —*PTI*